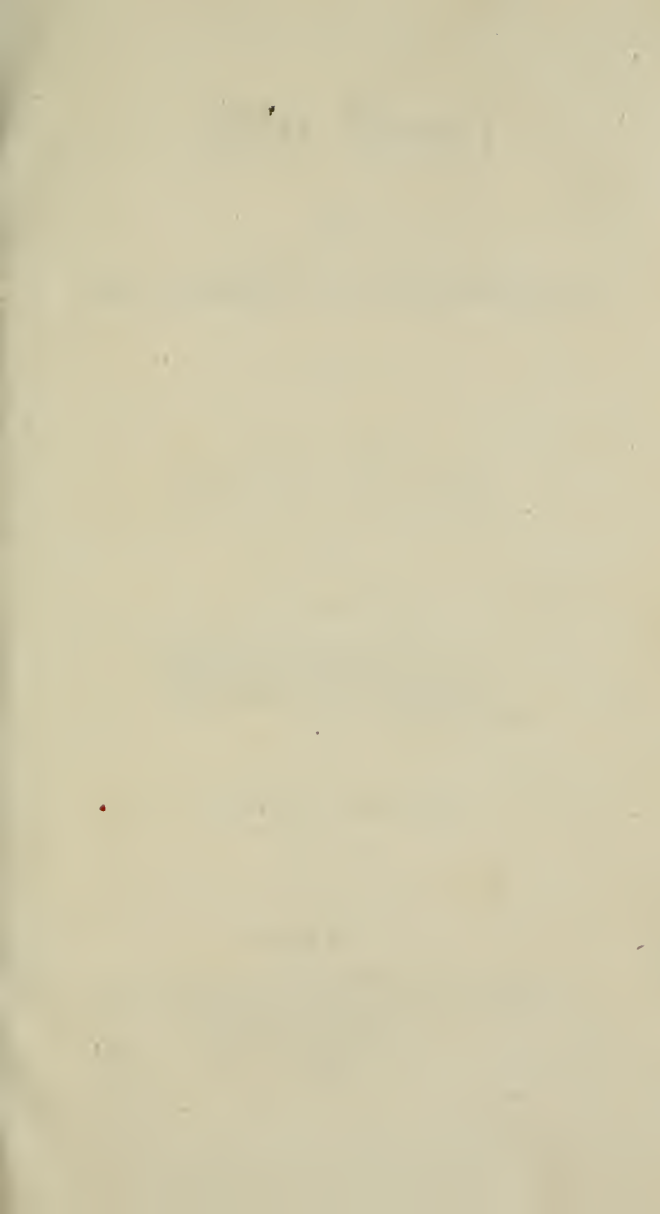






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Other Times ;

OR,

THE MONKS OF LEADENHALL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
THE LOLLARDS; — THE MYSTERY;
CALTHORPE, OR FALLEN FORTUNES;
&c. &c.

All thynges in this boke that ye shall rede,
Doe as ye lyst, there shall no manne you bynde,
Them to beleue, as surely as your crede.
But notwithstanddyng certes in my mynde,
I durst well swere, as true ye shall them fynde.
SIR THOMAS MORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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OTHER TIMES;

OR,

THE MONKS OF LEADENHALL.

CHAPTER I.

Such boding thoughts did guilty conscience start.

TICKELL.

“IT is I,” said Edmund, who now found retreat or concealment utterly impossible.

The Abbot directed the light full on his countenance, and gazed for some moments, without speaking, in astonishment which cannot be described. His rising indignation served to dissipate his

confusion, and impatience to reproach put him in possession of speech.

“ For what purpose have you dared to haunt this spot ? ” he enquired. “ Is this your rigid observance of the duties which belong to a monastic life ? ”

“ It may be,” said Edmund, “ that I somewhat deviate from the course prescribed to me ; but I have sinned less against those rules by which this fraternity should be governed, than he who unblushingly reproves me.”

“ This insolence well accords with the refractory spirit which brought you hither. What is it you seek ? ”

“ The means of passing from what ought to be a house of piety, but which you have made a den of abominable iniquity.”

“ Indeed ! ”

“ Yes,” said Edmund, “ it is even so ; I have had proofs irrefragable of the fact. I witnessed your drunken orgies when you believed no eye watched your pro-

ceedings. I have found you here this night ; and yet more, I have heard from those lips words which leave no doubt of the awful guilt in which you are implicated. Your hypocrisy thus established, it is vain to dissemble.”

“ Agreed : it is vain to dissemble ; and who is he that arrogates to himself such vast importance, as to suppose that in his presence dissimulation might be prudence ? ”

“ I, in my own person, am nothing ; but through my means you may be brought to answer for your conduct before those whom you will not dare to treat with contempt. That which has come to my knowledge shall be communicated to Lord Erpingham.”

“ By whom ? ”

“ By me.”

“ Before you execute so noble a design, it will be necessary for you to pass from this monastery, and that, after what has now chanced, may not happen soon.

You have told me that it is vain to dissemble, and from this time forward you shall find me sufficiently frank. Since you have become a spy on my conduct, I now announce to you that you shall never leave these walls alive."

"You will find the law too potent for your malice. My situation cannot long be concealed."

"There might have been much difficulty, and some hazard, in attempting concealment, had you from the first acted differently. Thanks to your folly, I am now absolutely master of your fate. Lord Erpingham, knowing of your anxiety to be dead to the world, will make no effort to ascertain your actual situation but through me. He shall hear much of your austere piety, but he shall never see your face — never hear the sound of your voice again. The ascendancy which I possess over him, and which sufficed to make him abjure his own nephew, will not fail to satisfy him that you desire to

see him no more, when all I say but corroborates what you yourself have told him,”

The effrontery with which the individual whom, till lately, Edmund had regarded as a model of piety, proclaimed himself equal to any crime, filled the object of his wrath with equal amazement and horror. He made no reply ; but a succession of ideas, growing out of his peculiar situation, ran through his mind. He reflected that all chance of leaving the house with the Abbot's permission was for ever lost. To quit it without his consent, since he had become more than an object of suspicion, would be extremely difficult. There was nothing to encourage a confident hope of success, if, having lost his ally, who was to have directed his footsteps, he should now attempt to execute his original design. But it was probable that a better opportunity would never offer. He had been

told that the bolts of the door at the extremity of the passage which he was to traverse were on the inside : the Abbot was alone, the female who had accompanied him having retired during their altercation; if then he could overpower the resistance which Egbert might offer, (and of his ability to do this he had no doubt,) it was possible that he might yet escape. The chances were against success, but his situation was desperate, and he therefore resolved on making the attempt.

The time occupied by these thoughts was by no means equal to that which has been consumed in enumerating them. The Abbot had scarcely ceased to indulge the disdainful smile of triumph which accompanied his last retort, when Edmund arrived at that result which has been stated. Little disposed to pause where they then were, Egbert raised his voice to a louder tone of menace.

“ You shall not wait long for the reward of your presumption. Instantly retire.”

“ No,” said Edmund : “ I will advance.”

“ Advance ! and whither would you advance, I pray ?”

“ I care not whither, so I find an outlet from this detested scene of lust and murder.”

“ You pass not this way,” said the Abbot, opposing his person to the progress of Edmund, who now offered to cross the vault.

“ By Heaven I will ! Stand aside, or the consequences may be fatal.”

“ Villain !” thundered Egbert, “ dare you threaten murder.”

“ I threaten self-defence ; and he who opposes my endeavours to preserve my life, will do it at the peril of his own.”

He offered to pass, and in the same moment snatched the lantern which the Abbot had carried.

“ Help, help !” the latter vociferated.

Edmund seized him by the throat with fury. “ Attempt to repeat that cry,” he exclaimed, “ and by my soul’s best hope I will silence you for ever.”

He grasped the Abbot so tight, that whatever his will, the power of renewing the cry was taken from him ; his eyes rolled wildly, and Edmund, fearful that strangulation would actually ensue, slackened his hold. It occurred to him, that it would be wise to compel Egbert to be his guide, and judged that this might be effected by threats.

“ Wretch !” he exclaimed, and he grasped him again with violence : “ your last hour has sounded, if —”

At this moment he was seized from behind. Two monks had been brought to Egbert’s assistance by his cries, or called by his late companion. He struggled with desperation, but his efforts to break from them were unavailing.

“ This is well,” said Egbert ; “ you

came in good time to witness the attempt on my life ; here is sufficient proof to bring this offender to condign punishment. I now change my resolution : to-morrow morning shall see him in the hands of justice."

" Monster !" said Edmund, " you dare not execute your threat. Intrepid as you are in crime, you fear to meet me in the face of day."

" So the fool Clifford thought : he paid for his error with his ears ; yours may cost you your life. Take him away," he added, directing his speech to the two monks, who still restrained Edmund's arms. " Take him to his cell, and watch through the night. In the morning the felon shall be given into the custody of others."

Edmund suffered himself to be conducted from the vault in silence. The brothers who were his guards conveyed him to his cell ; then having fastened

the door on the outside, they continued to watch till they were summoned by the Abbot to consider what was next to be done, in order to secure the prisoner.

It was really the intention of Egbert to carry into execution the threat which he had held out, but on reflection, he doubted the wisdom of taking such a step. He had indeed evidence that Edmund had threatened his life for opposing a retreat from the monastery ; and to find that he had two witnesses to a fact so important, seemed, in the first moment of triumph, all that was necessary to effect with perfect security, the destruction of the being he hated. But he now doubted the wisdom of acting on the resolution which he had announced. Again to appear in public was that which he most anxiously desired to avoid. The statement which Edmund would make, though it could not repel the charge which he had to prefer, might direct suspicion where he was most solicitous that

its glance should never be sped. Egbert knew the world, and knew that the most ridiculous calumnies, often repeated, obtain some degree of credit, and he thence drew the inference, that improbable truths, frequently stated, would in like manner win credence. To appear as the prosecutor of Edmund so soon after he had sustained that character in the process against Clifford, would fix all eyes on him, and nothing could prevent surmises which must prove fatal to him, if they were once seriously entertained.

Nor, on looking more into the subject, could he see that the step which he had contemplated was at all necessary to gratify that thirst for vengeance which he felt.

When Clifford incurred his resentment, he was at large, and capable of spreading reports to his prejudice far and near. This was not the case with Edmund, who, already in his power, could be subjected to the severest imprison-

ment, without its being known beyond the limits of the monastery ; and within them he had strong reasons for believing that he could confide, if not in the attachment, at least in the depravity of the brethren, to keep that for ever a secret which he would not have revealed.

Strictly to confine Edmund was his final resolution. Doomed to unwonted privations, to reproach and insult in the then state of his health, it was not improbable that he would rapidly decline. He might speedily die ; but if his constitution should be too strong thus to be conquered, there were other means which could be used at pleasure.

Possessed of such advantages, the Abbot resolved not to brave publicity, but boldly to exercise the coercive measures which were at his command.

This decision he communicated to the two monks, who attended to know his will. They approved of it ; for they, like

himself, were averse from challenging public observation. Already had the fate of divers religious houses, against the inmates of which charges less serious than those which might be brought against the brothers of the Trinity, been sealed by the fiat of the king. Though some might conceive Henry's horror of vice and disorder to be affected, all knew his fondness for the wealth of convents, and the good things still in the enjoyment of divers pious fraternities, to be most ardent and sincere. They were therefore persuaded, that should the discipline be at all once generally known to be relaxed, the pretext thus supplied, would, in the judgment of the king, be quite sufficient to authorise a seizure, which would gratify his avarice under the cloak of pretended zeal for the interests of religion.

With these views and feelings it was resolved that Edmund should be removed

to the prison cell, and there detained till death released him, or till circumstances should make it adviseable to deal with him in a different manner.

CHAP. II.

Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night in darkness lost ;
Hope not sunshine every hour,
Fear not clouds will always low'r.

BURNS.

THE humble state to which Clifford was degraded has necessarily precluded him from being seen much with those whose proceedings have hitherto been the subject of this narrative. To him we must now direct our attention for a season. When life opened before Clifford, exulting in the advantages of a good constitution, an ample fortune, and high connections, he forgot to regulate his conduct by those prudential considerations which old men require should be honoured with unqualified reverence, which young men concur in neglecting altogether

He indulged in many excesses, and his extravagances brought him very soon to the end of his means. That his misconduct was great cannot be denied ; but it ought to be added, that his virtues as well as his vices contributed to his ruin. If much wealth passed from him to purchase irregular enjoyments, still more was withdrawn from his store by an unreflecting generosity, ever on the alert to reward and relieve. False friendship and pretended distress attacked him by turns, and the borrower and the beggar combined their efforts to despoil the thoughtless stripling, who, while he honoured the virtues of his uncle, forgot the precepts which from time to time it had been the object of Lord Erpingham to inculcate.

But in the opinion of that nobleman, there were several circumstances which tended not to justify but to palliate the improvidence of his young relation. Clifford's own fortune was small com-

pared with the wealth which he might one day expect to have at his command. His marriage with the Lady Elinor, the beautiful daughter of Sir Geoffrey Brandon, promised to enrich him, and eventually he might expect to succeed to the greater part, if not to the whole of the fortune of Lord Erpingham. Though these advantages ought not to have induced profligacy, the uncle was little surprised to find his young relation a spendthrift. He endeavoured repeatedly to reclaim the wanderer, but he never viewed his transgressions as sins which were not to be forgiven.

That depravity, which to cover its own misdoings could seek to blast the fame of a holy and exemplary character, he regarded as totally differing from all in which Clifford had previously offended. He anxiously hoped the charge preferred by father Egbert could not be sustained; but when it was established in the face of day by evidence above all

question or suspicion, it was then that Lord Erpingham believed himself to be degraded by the crimes of his relation, who, from that time forward, he regarded as a monster.

After Clifford sustained the ignominious punishment to which he was condemned, he endeavoured to fly from the haunts of all to whom he had once been known. He employed, with little management, the wretched remnant of his wealth in purchasing concealment. His lacerated flesh was soon cured, but his mind had received a shock no medical skill, no healing art could reach. Reflection, which in ordinary cases brings the troubled mind relief, yielded none to him ; but, on the contrary, it served from day to day to renew and aggravate his grief, and his conduct was marked but by the mournful variations of delirious raving, and mute and motionless despair.

Near the river side, and at the distance

of about a mile from the town of Woolwich, he found a retreat at a place called Podd's Elms, from the number of trees of that description which flourished on the spot. Here a poor man, who occasionally lived by fishing, and who at particular seasons found some humble occupation in the towns of Woolwich and Greenwich, had built himself a hut. It contained two small compartments, and one of these he consented to give up to Clifford. He, who had revelled in all the luxury which wealth could purchase, was content to rest in a place decidedly inferior to that in which his own hounds had been lodged. But Clifford was now dead to those feelings which can be wounded by privation. He sighed not for the splendid mansions which he had once known; for the joyous groups in which he had mingled, nor for the wealth he had formerly possessed. He could only brood over the disgrace which had fallen on him. When he remembered

the scorn which the world at large heaped on his name, it came with overwhelming weight to crush him to the earth ; but when one other thought rushed across his mind, it traversed his fevered veins with the fiery rapidity of lightning ; and as one more exquisite touch than the rest wakes the expiring wretch on the wheel to a thrilling exhibition of agony, so, when the idea that he was now an object of contempt to Elinor insinuated itself, he started from drooping melancholy, to the wildest display of frantic misery.

Sometimes he wandered beneath the shade of the elms, attempting to form plans of vengeance ; but these he could not bring, in the then state of his mind, to any thing which even for him had the appearance of perfection. If a thought of vindication occurred, it was speedily dismissed, as too puerile to be entertained ; and then, remembering the incredulity of the world, he would vainly attempt

to give vent to the bitter anguish which he felt, and call upon the passing winds to bear his reproaches and execrations to those for whom they were breathed.

In one of these paroxysms he found himself at the edge of the river. It was nightfall. He had passed the day in perfect solitude, and all around was silent, save when the last breeze of autumn claimed a portion of the discoloured leaves, which still lingered on the neighbouring trees; and while his down-cast eyes fell on the gliding water beneath, he suddenly changed the course of his language.

“Why,” said he, “why like a maniac should I wander here to load the careless winds with my foolish complaints and impotent curses? True, my enemies have triumphed over me; but is that a reason why I should become their ally, and prolong their triumph and my own torture, by remaining the inhabitant of a world, which, for me, through their machinations, is blasted for ever?”

He paused, revolving in his mind the thought which had occurred to him : his eyes were fixed on the water, he saw his own image therein, and exclaimed,

“ I see the shadow of the shadow which I have become. Why should a wretch have two shadows ? I will unite myself to that which I look upon. All that I once prized has passed away : whatever earth contains that is lovely has ceased to exist for me ; why then continue to exist for that which is loathsome ? It might be sin to die if any survived to mourn my death ; but no eye will shed a tear for me, no heart will feel a pang for the lost Clifford.”

“ O ! say not, think not so,” cried one near him, who now anxiously pressed forward to prevent the completion of his design.

“ What voice is that ?” he demanded.

“ Is it Clifford asks ? Is the voice of Elinor no more remembered ?”

“ It may never be forgotten ; but is it in truth the voice of Elinor which now fills my ears?”

“ Let your doubt cease ; look on me. A happy accident has furnished the clue to your retreat.”

Clifford's eyes were fixed on the female, whose soothing voice detained him from suicide ; but his gaze seemed that of a statue : there was no intelligence, no recognition in it.

“ Seek ye in vain to recal the features of Elinor?” she enquired, in a tone which blended affliction with tenderness. It thrilled the unfortunate, but the emotion which it inspired was too mighty to admit of instant speech.

Elinor, while she accosted him, had offered to take his hand. He started back, but immediately after received its pressure, and in a faltering voice replied,

“ I have heard that the foe of man can produce bright illusions to cheat the

sinner he would lure to perdition ; but thou art too divine to be the work of his hand. It is — it must be she who *was my Elinor.*”

“ Who will be ever thine.”

“ How !” he exclaimed. “ What mean you ? Has order sprung anew from chaos ? Is the hypocrite who destroyed me known ?”

Elinor mournfully shook her head, to intimate that she brought no such happy tidings.

“ No,” said he ; “ I was a driveller to believe it possible. The villain’s web of fraud is not to be unravelled. But why are you here ?”

“ Because, though undetected by others, he is not believed by me.”

“ Nor by your father ? Tell me, does he doubt my guilt ?”

Elinor was silent.

“ I thought you could not answer that. But since it is thus, how is it that you are here — at this hour too — and alone ? What may this mean ?”

“ It means but this : that love, despising calumny, has discarded cold prudence, to follow and to soothe affliction.”

“ Riddle not to me, Elinor. My ruined mind can scarcely pursue the common beaten track of conversation.”

“ In plainer language, then, while all beside declared you guilty, my heart proclaimed you innocent ; and, though unhappily alone in this opinion, I could not yield to the reasoning of others.”

“ But why — why are you here ?”

“ Another lover has been named to me. I have been required to forsake you, because you were persecuted. My soul abhorred the thought. I felt that duty required from one faithful to virtue, that she should remain as constant to the lord of her affections in calamity, as the sordid crowd agree a woman should be to him who is not thus depressed.”

“ Amazement !” cried Clifford. “ I know not what I ought to reply. But, O ! it were madness to seek in lan-

guage that affluence of expression which might fitly embody the transport, — the ecstasy of this moment.”

“ Then Elinor is blessed : yet, trust me, I am sad to seek ye thus alone.”

“ But I—I,” said Clifford, breathless with rapture, “ am over-joyed. At first I hoped the world had done me justice — that you came by desire of your father to reclaim me ; but to find that, this not being the case, you brave the scorn and the reproach of all mankind for love of me, is even greater bliss than to be restored to the height from which I have fallen.”

“ But, my Clifford, you forget —”

“ The baubles which the giddy multitude admire. True, Elinor ; wealth I forget, and even fame I care not to remember : possessed of thee, a living jewel of such surpassing radiance, it were to transgress beyond the veriest miser’s sinning to covet one other good on earth.”

“ Since you feel thus, it is not for me to think of riches.”

“ What wealth could I have that would not shrink into worthlessness, placed by the side of such a treasure ! Thou comest over my fading eyes, sweetly, gaily consoling to the vision, like the first rainbow which smiled on the deluged world, or like a ray of ethereal light, beaming in mercy on the darkness of perdition.”

“ If my presence can wake you to hope, I have not come hither in vain : but suffer not intoxicating joy to prevent the voice of reason from being heard. I dare not flatter myself that I shall bring happiness ; but, by sharing your privations, my society may console, and my example teach resignation.”

“ Incomparable Elinor ! I sometimes doubted if a being so sublime as Egeria could brook the thralldom of a world like this. But how is she surpassed, who sought the glory of a *Numa*, by that un-

earthly affection which stoops to lift from degradation and despair the lowly and debased thing that I am.”

“ Wrong not yourself, Clifford. Because you are contemned by the world—because slight failings have been swollen into crimes of enormous magnitude, you are not therefore debased. A day will come when your enemies shall be put to shame.”

“ I will indulge the thought, since you would inspire it: —but no; it is a treacherous thought, and must not be encouraged. If you share my fortune, you become the partner of incurable sorrow and lasting disgrace.”

“ Then sorrow and disgrace are my choice; for I will not consent to separate my destiny from yours.”

“ Bethink thee, Elinor, how much you must sacrifice, becoming the wife of Clifford.”

“ I nothing sacrifice in resigning that

which I cannot value, for him whom I prize above the whole creation besides."

"Elinor, you know not what you do. I was never worthy of such excellence; but I am now no longer even what I was. Calamity has destroyed me. I am impatient, —reckless, —too frequently not master of myself."

"Then you stand the more in need of such poor aid as I may supply."

"But my temper has become rough and churlish; and I shall harshly chide."

"And if you do, I will nothing reply; but I will weep, not that you are unkind to me, but that Heaven has been unkind to you."

"Back to your father, Elinor: I will none of you. A gem so costly should deck a nobler bosom."

"There is no nobler. I will hear of no other on earth. I will be thine alone."

"But softness like thine can ill contend with those rough storms which I must face."

“ Doubt me not. By the side of Clifford I will brave danger like an Amazon ; it is only when your frown falls on me that you shall see me tremble.”

“ But I have heretofore been weak and fickle : I shall be inconstant.”

“ I will not see it : I will only know you what I would have you. The rest of the world may condemn, but I will not heed their reproaches, nor believe you other than my heart tells me you are now.”

Clifford was again speechless from joy ; and, while pressing the fair hand of Elinor to his parched lips, his streaming eyes were raised to Heaven in silent gratitude.

CHAP. III.

His proud front unused to blush,
Was tinged with momentary flush.

GRATTAN.

IN the midst of those follies which had engrossed the mind of Clifford, he had been inspired with a sincere passion for the interesting Elinor; and when that sentence was pronounced against him, which disgraced his name and ruined his prospects, the grief which pressed most heavily on his heart rose from the reflection that he might no longer aspire to her. When he found her unexpectedly restored, and under circumstances which rendered her more dear to him than she had previously been, he seemed to wake to a new existence. The pain he had known, the fortune he had lost, and even the shame which he had sustained,

were forgotten, or regarded as trifles unworthy of remembrance. His bosom was too full of present joy to admit regret for the past, or anxiety for the future. Their marriage was solemnized, and with, drawing to a small but convenient cottage though their means were slender, they desired no happiness beyond what they found in each other's society.

But all that had remained to Clifford was soon expended ; and the little gold which Elinor possessed when she sought the hiding place of her lover, was also exhausted. Sinking by degrees, they passed through the melancholy gradations of poverty till they approached the extremity of distress, and began to look for its termination in famine.

It was then that the lovers awoke from their dream of bliss, and were compelled to acknowledge that passion, however pure and glowing, cannot ensure unalloyed felicity without deriving some aliment from sources which are far too gross

and too contemptible to be viewed as of importance by those who, transported by thoughtless ecstasy, believe their affection too ethereal to require such solace as food, shelter, and repose may afford.

For himself, Clifford little regarded privation, but when he looked on the pale Elinor, and on the infant at her breast, the burning tear would steal down his cheek, and he felt that if the joy he had tasted was great, the suffering which followed in its train was not less exquisite.

He however disdained to yield to his fate without a struggle, and would not suffer unmanly grief to prevent him from using the best exertions in his power to support those who had become indissolubly connected with him. To obtain what their wants required, there was no danger which he would not have braved. It was a harder task to bend a spirit like his to a lowly occupation, but affection triumphed over pride,

and it has been seen, that he brought himself to submit to the most humiliating drudgery. It was with bitterness of heart that he gazed on Elinor thus reduced, but her courage never declined; and she endured not only without repining but with cheerfulness. She confessed no grief but that which arose from her being unable to tranquillise the ruffled spirits of her lord. Clifford, as he stated to Edmund, had come to the resolution of passing over to America. Elinor was not one moment in deciding to accompany him; and when the business of the *translation* had terminated, they repaired to Deal, in the hope of finding a passage by a vessel at that time lying in the Downs.

Clifford saw the master of the ship, and acquainted him with his wish. The sum which he had to tender was small, but the offer of his services in any way which might be required made up in some degree for the deficiency, and the

mariner was content to receive them on board. Clifford congratulated himself on his good fortune. Not an hour was to be lost, as the vessel sailed that very day, and the boat was then leaving the shore for the last time. They had no reason to wish their departure deferred, as they had no property to arrange, no means of purchasing luxuries for their comfort on the voyage, and no friends to bid adieu.

Assisted by Clifford, Elinor had already passed into the boat, he was following, with the infant in his arms, when the child, unobserved, entangling his fingers in the string of the cap worn by the father, untied it. Clifford, as he stepped over the edge of the boat, felt it falling: he endeavoured to save it, but in vain; and he stood uncovered before the master and the sailors who were in the boat.

“How now, bedfellow!” cried the master; but the word bedfellow, then com-

monly used as an expression of kindness, was pronounced in a tone, which proved to the conscious Clifford that it was used ironically and reproachfully. He hastened forward, took his seat in the boat, but offered no reply.

One of the sailors offered to push off.

“Tarry,” roared the master, “my bark, the good *Make-shift*, is no galley in the which to receive thieves.”

Clifford felt acutely that this speech was directed against him, and, rising with that fiery indignation which forgets all disparity of condition, he accosted the mariner :

“Mean you to call me thief? Breathe another word like that, and by the Saviour of the world you will run some risk of meeting with a sudden check.”

He however reflected that it might be wise to subdue his wrath; and he added, with an effort at calmness, looking towards the sailors, “Put off the boat.”

The master again interfered. “Softly,”

said he: "it may be that this gallant is no thief, but has merely had his ears removed for the accommodation of his cap. Nathless, this not being known to me, he shall not become one of my crew."

"What mean you?" demanded Clifford.

"Marry! this I mean, that you find no room on board the *Make-shift*."

"Varlet! have I not paid thee for my passage?"

"Take back the price of your company," the master replied, returning the sum which he had received from Clifford: "I cannot find accommodation meet for one of your calling, without some charge which I care not to incur."

"Accommodation!" said Clifford; "I have told you that I should crave but little."

"The accommodation to which my discourse turns," replied the master, "is not that which you might crave, but which you may deserve. Sea-tackle is much expensive; and I care not to squander

away my good cordage on knaves, who may as well tarry on land to get hanged."

Clifford sprung forward, in a transport of fury. The master first sought to evade, then to resist his attack, but both endeavours were fruitless. The rage of which he was the object gave superhuman strength; and in a moment he was lifted from the boat, and hurled with violence into the sea. The sailors, who had begun to laugh at the ribaldry of the master, were in consternation, and knew not whether to assist him or to defend themselves. One of them pushed off the boat.

"Put back," said Clifford, with a tone of authority which failed not to impress those to whom he spoke with the importance of yielding prompt obedience. They however ventured to say, that the master would be in danger of drowning if they neglected to succour him.

"And what then?" Clifford sternly asked. "If he sink while I am landing,

he will drown alone ; but if you scruple to obey my bidding, you may chance to drown with him."

They sullenly put the boat round, and Clifford, the child clinging round his neck, throwing his left arm round Elinor, and sustaining her weight, turned fiercely towards the boatmen, as if to intimate that thus encumbered, with his right arm alone he could bid defiance to them. He stepped backward to the end of the boat, and thence to the shore.

The sailors hastened to lift the master from the water, and Clifford leisurely retired. Anger for a time made him insensible of pain, but when his fury began to abate, his affliction was extreme. To be thwarted in the very moment when he believed the object he had most at heart to be accomplished, and when he was already exulting that he had taken his last step in that land which had witnessed his disgrace, inspired the most agonising regret. While he looked

on the innocently smiling cause of the accident which had occurred, he sadly exclaimed,

“ O guiltless mischief! Already has thy hand begun to revenge the wrong thou hast sustained from him who condemned thee to life.”

“ Perhaps,” said Elinor, “ he is the instrument of Providence to save his father from unsuspected peril.”

It was her constant practice to endeavour thus to build hope on, and derive consolation from, every untoward occurrence. The remark which she made pointed to no expected event. But when, journeying through Kent, they heard, in the course of the succeeding week, that the *Make-shift* had perished at sea, and that all her crew was lost, while commiserating the fate of the unfortunate mariners, she then referred to the act of the child which had prevented them from sailing.

“ See you not the finger of Providence which has already enabled this unconscious babe to save his parents from destruction? After this, it were not merely weakness but impiety to despair.”

It was not probable that another ship would speedily sail, and they were constrained to seek shelter in the place where Clifford had been concealed till he was discovered by Elinor. The fisherman was disposed to give up the whole of his wretched hovel at *Podd's Elms*; and miserable as this abode was, Elinor preferred it to superior accommodation, which must speedily exhaust the little fund they had accumulated, by means of which Clifford sought to pass to some country in which they might live forgotten and unknown.

Faithful to the principle on which she had originally avowed it to be her determination to act, Elinor rose superior to distress; and had Clifford felt equally at his ease, equally disposed to hope, and

equally regardless of their present lowly condition, she had been happy. But he was restless and repining : he loathed the indolence in which his life was spent ; and discontented with himself, he sometimes forgot for a moment that tenderness which he had been accustomed to observe towards Elinor.

One evening he was walking by the river, when Elinor approached, leading her infant, and guiding and regulating its first efforts to walk. He perceived her, and hastily called to her,

“ Come not hither ; I want thee not.”

“ The night looks as if it would be stormy,” she remarked ; “ I pray thee abide not here.”

“ I live in a perpetual storm : what then is the roaring of thunder, of winds, or of waves to me ? But get thee gone : I said I wanted thee not.”

“ But you will forgive a few moments of disobedience, if I still draw near thee ; for this is a dear and a blessed spot to

me, since here it was my fortune to arrest the rapid step of my Clifford, when phrenzy had nearly consigned him to a watery grave."

"Your happy lot, Elinor!"

"Even so. Know you not the place where I surprised you?"

"I know it right well, and therefore did I bid thee avoid me. Go, I say."

Elinor was retiring, when he called to her in an altered tone —

"Come hither, Elinor. I spoke harshly; but I would not be unkind. I hate myself for being so irascible."

"You wrong yourself. You never chide from anger, but from sorrow; and knowing that, can I think you unkind?"

"Nay, Elinor, but I see it distresses you."

"It would distress me to hear you groan; and when there is unkindness in your speech, ascribing it to suffering, I am only distressed because you are in pain."

"I, Elinor, am as a lute: guarded

with care, I might have been able to furnish gentle harmony ; but exposed to the raging storm, my swollen or perished chords answer no longer to the delicate touch which should awaken music, save with irregular throbs and fearful discord."

" Rather say that mine is the unskilful hand that knows not how to seek the harmony it would call forth. Yet I did feel confident that I erred not when I sought to join you here."

" Come to me, Elinor. Look there — look in the water — what see you ?"

" The reflections of our persons."

" No more ?"

" No more, save that of the child."

" Aye, there it is, Elinor. On that well remembered night, when I gazed on the wave, one image, — but one, met my view : now I see three. Had I been left to perish then, the two poor destitute beings whose shadows are associated with mine had not been here, to pine

with me if I continue to live, to mourn my loss if I die. I bade thee retire, because I wished not to contemplate the picture I now behold. Do you not hate me, Elinor, that I permitted the generous sacrifice your love prepared? Would to heaven you had left me. — Leave, leave me now — get thee home.”

A sound of footsteps near arrested their attention. Clifford looked round, and saw the figure of a man pass the hut, and vanish among the elms in its rear.

“It is strange,” said he, “that a lurker should be here: but it boots us little to know his errand. His presence will not endanger our wealth.” Then resuming his former tone, he said, “Go home — go; I would have thee fly me.”

“Does my presence offend you?”

“It afflicts.”

“And why? — Am I not as I have ever been?”

“Yes, Elinor, and more is the sorrow. Could I be what I have been, not for

the proudest diadem on earth should'st thou leave my side."

" But being other than you were, you more require the aid of a comforter."

" But such you cannot be. Your presence exasperates almost to madness ; for I feel, that instead of requiting such devotedness by the attentions of the lover or the husband worthy of you, I can but give a degraded felon to your arms."

" Leave such base, such unjust language to the disparaging world. I view thee not as one degraded, but as one oppressed. Trust me, thou art dearer to me than if thou hadst not been in this strait. As thou wert formerly I loved thee ; but in calamity there is something sacred, which affection approaches with increasing fondness, and religious awe."

" Hence with these witcheries. You torture me. Go to your father—he may again receive you. Take the poor urchin with thee."

Again they perceived, while Clifford was speaking, the stranger they had before observed, who at this moment advanced in silence from the trees, as if to listen to their conversation.

“Come forward,” Clifford called to him. “If to contemplate wretchedness can delight, here shall you be gratified.”

Perceiving this speech to be addressed to him, the unknown hastily retired.

“Go, Elinor,” said Clifford, with persuasive mildness. “Your father, though he may not forgive, will receive. He will shelter your infant, and save him from those fearful evils which shall otherwise be his deplorable inheritance.”

“I know this dread haunts you more than any other; but this you ought not to feel. Look on your boy; did he want just proportion I might fear for his welfare. But heaven has given him well fashioned limbs, and will in time bestow firmness, intelligence, and courage. Why then despond? The privations to which

we can with difficulty reconcile ourselves will be as nothing to him ; and inured to hardship, and accustomed to peril, he will stand forward among the fearless, born to enterprise, and destined to success."

" Sweet comforter !" exclaimed Clifford, fondly pressing the hand of Elinor to his bosom ; " it is thine to pour the softest balsam on my wounded heart. Though love, to be blessed, requires the power to bless, the invincible smile of that dear countenance, which no harshness can disturb, nor privation dispel, even now has the power of gilding ruin with joy, and relieving that prospect with a gleam of hope, which but for thee would only present the appalling gloom of unmitigated despair."

They approached their lowly resting-place, and their eyes were directed to the spot where they had twice perceived a stranger. Whoever he might be, his form was no longer to be seen ; and Clif-

ford, though the circumstance moved his curiosity, felt no alarm. Extreme poverty has at least the advantage of sparing those who endure it that fear of depredation to which under happier circumstances they would occasionally be exposed.

CHAP. IV.

Leave this vain sorrow.

Things being at the worst, begin to mend.

WEBSTER.

IN consequence of the reflections which had determined Egbert, he passed to the cell in which Edmund rested. The day had dawned when he entered, accompanied by the brothers of whose assistance he had previously availed himself. Edmund supposed they came to execute the threat which had been held out to him, but was astonished at their early appearance. He made no remark, and secretly rejoiced that the moment was already come when he should be enabled to prefer his charge against Egbert ; for the inexperience of Edmund, notwithstanding all he had heard of Clifford, en-

couraged a confident hope, that because justice was on his side he could not fail to command belief, and put to shame his accusers.

They approached in silence. When he found himself suddenly blindfolded, his thoughts took a different turn, and he expected immediate assassination. He could not escape them, and nothing remained but to meet his fate with firmness. They passed along the corridor, and descended, as he believed, the steps at the extremity of the passage leading from the refectory. A door was then opened, but whether it was that of the burial-place or of some adjoining vault, he could not determine. He was now made to ascend six or eight steps, when another door was opened, which admitted them into a small damp cell, and here his eyes were unbound. He did not at once comprehend the real purpose of those who brought him there, for to him this dismal apartment seemed quite as well

fitted for murder as for detention, — for a tomb, as for a prison.

“ Here is your home,” said Egbert.

“ Is it here that I am to die?” enquired Edmund.

“ It may so fall out.”

“ Then all the mercy I can implore with any chance of being listened to, is, that you will dispatch your bloody work as briefly as possible.”

“ No, fool, it is not my pleasure to dismiss thee suddenly from life. To take such a step I am not prepared.”

“ Would that be too kind?”

“ It might prove so. Enquiries are now so frequently made into the affairs of religious establishments, that it would ill assort with those measures which prudence dictates to have thee die too soon. Those who take an interest in thy fate must first be prepared for such a catastrophe. When they have been told that thy life is in danger — when they have seen thee —”

“ Seen me !”

“ Aye, when they have *seen* ; — I knew that word would wake a spark of hope to mock thee for a moment ; — they may see thee, but not to soothe thee in thy latest hour, no, nor to listen to the vengeful tale which thou wouldst fain relate of Egbert. Ere they approach, care shall be taken to steep thy senses in drowsy forgetfulness. They shall behold thee as one on whom the leaden hand of death hath already fallen, though as yet he has not grasped his prize. They shall look upon thee thus, and thereupon report the truth abroad, that thy death is inevitable, but thou shall not recognise them. It shall be thine to know that they are about to approach, and afterwards to mourn that they have fled whilst thou wert all unconscious of their coming.”

“ Monster ! this cowardly baseness exceeds all that even the previous knowledge of thee could suggest.”

“ So I trust, for I have ever believed

myself above the comprehension of the world."

" Yet you fear that it would rightly estimate you now, or you would not shrink from appearing before it as my accuser, which you announced to be your purpose but a few hours since."

" Reflection has since whispered that he who can safely inflict vengeance with his own hand, acts unwisely to call in the aid of any halting auxiliary."

" And am I to have no trial?"

" None ; here is your resting place ; — here, where daylight never enters, shall you remain. The lamp which I bear shall be left for your accommodation, that you may see the damp trickle down the black walls, and mark the amblings of the reptiles destined to be your companions. I would not leave you in darkness, lest you should be ignorant of a part of the accommodation prepared for you."

" These efforts at revenge are im-

potent," said Edmund: "to the reptiles of which you speak, I shall turn with respect, after gazing on an object so much more odious and contemptible as that which now offends my vision."

"I will not long detain you from those sublime reveries in which you pant to indulge. Look round on these walls, look on them, and let hope expire."

Edmund surveyed them with a steady eye, and then looked upon Egbert.

"This," said the monk, "is the meet reward of persevering folly. Bear it in mind I advised thee not to think of a monastery. Thou comest not here by invitation of mine."

"I can well conceive it was not thy wish to have one for a witness of thy doings, who had a heart not so far depraved as to fit him for the fellowship of wretches whose crimes extend to murder."

"To murder!"

"Aye, thou knowest it well. My ear

deceived me not. Too well I heard thee express the horrid hope that the infant about to be born might rest in its grave before another day had risen."

" True, driveller ; but what has that to do with murder ?"

" To the wilful, unjustifiable destruction of human life I give no other name."

" It is of little use to change words with thee. But yet thy dulness moves my pity, and I feel tempted to enlighten thine ignorance. That which thou wouldest foolishly condemn as murder, I can demonstrate is true humanity."

" At least you can assert it. But spare yourself the trouble, with a view to my improvement."

" Nay," cried Egbert, somewhat excited by the contemptuous indifference of Edmund, " I will prove it so that even you shall concur with me. When one of two must perish, the parent or the offspring, can humanity hesitate for a

moment whether to extinguish the dim perceptions of unconscious infancy, or sacrifice the mother in the bloom of mature life?

“I hear the sound of your voice, but listen not to the course of your reasoning, — if reasoning that may be named which aims at the justification of murder.”

“Your humanity,” said Egbert, with a mingled expression of wrath and disdain; “would, I suppose, take an opposite course. You would give the parent to death, and call it virtue to doom a nun to be entombed alive.”

“How!” exclaimed Edmund, no more affecting indifference to what fell from the lips of his enemy.

The abbot mistook the cause of that emotion, which he failed not to observe, and believing the exclamation to grow on the mention which he had made of the tremendous punishment awarded against

the nun who forgot her vows, he proceeded : —

“ Such is the penalty exacted from the tender being who obeys the impulse of nature in opposition to her engagements with the church. Immured between walls from which no outlet is permitted, one sad meal is provided for the devoted, that her sufferings may be protracted for a day or two to give her time for prayer. This is the sentence which your humanity would pronounce, in failing to blot out that existence which, if not quenched at once, must subject the pale votaress of religion to the horrid inflictions decreed in such cases by the secret rules and ancient practice of the sisters of the order of Saint Helen.”

Edmund shuddered when Egbert confessed that the female of whom he had been speaking was a nun, at the remote idea that Mariana might by possibility be exposed to the misery of associating with persons of impure life ; but when he

found that what he feared might happen, was that which had actually occurred, his horror knew no bounds. He groaned deeply, and wildly gazing on his informant, he faltered, —

“Spoke ye of St. Helen?”

“I did. I have told you what has been in other times the practice of that sisterhood, and now leave you to exult in the superior humanity which would —”

“Barbarian, cease! bring your dagger or your bowl. I will stand firm while you use the one, or readily drain the other. But if one atom of humanity remains in that form, repeat not the fearful outrage you have now committed on my startled senses.”

“What mummerly is this?” cried the priest, looking first on Edmund, and then on his companions.

“Was it for this,” exclaimed Edmund, giving vent to the sad reflections which invaded his bosom, without regarding

Egbert ; “ was it for this that two hearts were torn asunder ? ”

Egbert started.

“ You have done well,” said he. “ I knew that disappointed love had first moved you to enter a monastery ; but I remembered not, occupied as I have been, the beauty who had influenced your conduct. If you err in all else I will not deny that the charms of Mariana merited your attention. I will prove this my sincere opinion, by bestowing upon her no small portion of mine.”

“ Villain or devil, whichever thou art, what horrid meaning lurks beneath thy ambiguous speech and scowling eye ? At what would thy depravity aspire ? ”

“ At Mariana. You need not be told that the subterranean recesses, destined formerly to be the prison and the sepulchre of frail members of the sisterhood, are now more humanely, more wisely made the means of communicating joy and consolation to those who tread

in the footsteps of St. Helen. Availing myself of these, what shall bar me from the beauty !”

“ You dare not that way bend your thoughts. You cannot meditate such fearful profanation. You dare not attempt to sully that angelic being — that breathing image of the Deity.”

“ But I shall not fear to worship it.”

“ Her dignity and virtue will repel. You cannot — dare not use violence.”

“ What I dare do, and what in regard to Mariana I shall do, may be matters quite distinct. From violence at present she is safe, nor do I think that it is likely she will be exposed to it hereafter. Leaving the world and its pleasures with avowed regret, the maid will perhaps be consoled to know that she who has courage to do herself justice, may baffle the cold calculations of persecuting friends.”

“ Away. You mean not what you say. Your object was to torture, and I

cannot deny that you have been successful."

" My object is to make you feel the power you have braved, and tremble for the wrath you have incurred. In me you see a man whose heart has ever been the seat of the fiercest passions. My destiny placed me in that situation in which my all depended on their being subdued or disguised. I strove in vain to conquer them, but laboured more successfully at concealment. Momentary imprudence betrayed my secret ; successful artifice retrieved the miscarriage. Aged dreamers, who had outlived the capability of knowing enjoyment, deluded the world into the idle belief that it was religion to abstain from pleasures which had been placed beyond their reach for ever. The tyrannic sway which their principles obtained doomed me to an extended career of misery, or a persevering course of bold hypocrisy. I have decided for the latter ; and you will find I lack

not courage to seize all the advantages which it may offer, and to meet all the perils which may ensue.

Edmund gazed on the speaker with a look of wonder. The ingenuous depravity of Egbert astonished and confounded him ; but the fierce emotions which raged in his breast precluded reply.

The monk, transported with the glow of triumph, left him to his loathsome solitude, but not till he had intimated that vengeance, at present but imperfectly satisfied, might yet inflict severer pain, and give the lover an opportunity of beholding his mistress overpowered by force, or, more probably won by persuasion, in the arms of another, the degraded slave of his will.

CHAP. V.

Fool that I was, to start at my own shadow,
And be the shallow fool of coward Conscience.

HOME.

AFTER what had occurred in the monastery, Egbert considered it politic to see Lord Erpingham without delay. Though he had little apprehension that any thing which he wished to remain unknown would transpire, he was anxious to be guarded at all points. Yielding to the wish of Edmund, Lord Erpingham had ceased to desire to see him. The secret of his confinement could only be revealed by those who, from the licence they enjoyed in common with himself, were equally interested in keeping the world ignorant of the crimes and disorders which prevailed in the establishment ; but he now wished to make

a statement which, though calculated wholly to mislead, should have a slight connection with truth ; so that it might seem to be corroborated even by the accusation which Edmund was disposed to bring forward, should he ever be enabled to do so.

It was Friday, and Lord Erpingham, accustomed to receive the monk on that day to assist him in his devotional exercises, looked for his coming with some impatience. He was seated in his study, absorbed in meditation. Ferdinand was near, and had as was his custom, preserved a moody silence for some hours. The attention of Lord Erpingham rested on his secretary ; and the fiery glance which flashed from the eyes of the South American created a momentary surprise. Full often had the peer wondered at the thoughtful reserve which he marked in so young a man. At first he had supposed the retirement which he courted to be preferred on account of scanty

means. It was the object of his liberality to remove the necessity of submitting to privation ; but the mysterious grief which oppressed him was not to be cured or diminished. Assistance was courteously but coldly declined, or, after repeated refusals, most unwillingly received.

Lord Erpingham thought he observed confusion and embarrassment in Ferdinand when their eyes met : but this idea passed away, and the imperturbable composure which usually sat on his countenance remained.

“ The day wears fast, Ferdinand,” said the peer. “ I begin to fear the holy father cannot leave the monastery, and that we shall pass the evening alone.”

“ Alone, my Lord ! Think you, we shall be wholly alone ?”

“ I do ; but why do you attach so much importance to that circumstance ?”

“ Because — because,” said Ferdinand, and he hesitated for a moment, — “ be-

cause I think we have never yet passed a whole afternoon and evening alone, and without expecting any one; — and —”

“ You pause and cease to speak, without appearing to have uttered what you had it in your mind to say. It has often struck me, and I know not why it now comes over me with peculiar force, that you may have something to impart, which you would wish to communicate when no one is by.”

“ I am not aware, my Lord, that any thing in my conduct might be expected to wake such an idea.”

“ It may be that I am wrong; but tell me if I am so.”

“ My Lord, I have nothing to communicate now — nothing *now*.”

“ Nothing now ! Does this mean that the time is gone by at which you would have communicated ?”

“ No, my Lord.”

“ Then am I to conclude that you have

something to tell which you prefer reserving till a future season?"

"I meant not to *say* that. But, my Lord, some one approaches by the private staircase. He is here."

"It is the holy father," Lord Erpingham exclaimed, with lively satisfaction. "I began to fear," he said, as Egbert entered, "that other duties would detain you till it would be too late to assist one not wholly under your guidance."

"And I was not without apprehension that such would be the case. Sorry am I to state that my delay has been caused by that which you will hear with sorrow. A grievous malady has attacked the life of Edmund. I tarried first to soothe the sufferer, as far as might be, and then lingered in the hope of being enabled, by doing so, to bring you better tidings of the young man."

"I am concerned to know that he is sick; but, doubtless, from your kind

care he has received all needful appliances."

"What medical skill can accomplish, and with the blessing of the Most High it may do much, will assuredly be effected for his relief."

"To what cause ascribe you this sudden visitation?"

"To overflowing piety. Not content with observing the ordinary usages of the house, he inflicts uncalled-for penances on himself. Yesternight I discovered him in the sepulchral vault. Thither I myself repaired, as is my custom, to indulge in solemn contemplation, when with much astonishment, I found him there, alone. He had doubtless sought the resting-place of the departed for a like holy purpose. Such I am led to infer was his object. He stated it not; but what else could take a pious youth, at midnight, to linger among the mouldering dead?"

"Methinks," said Lord Erpingham,

“ it might be well to admonish him not to use such freedoms with his constitution.”

“ This I have done ; and I have even, though much it wounded my feelings to coerce one so amiable, though somewhat misled, adventured to lay him under some kindly restraint, to the end that a life so dear may not again be endangered.”

“ You have done well ; but do you consider the danger great ?”

“ Previous sickness had wasted Edmund, and now, aggravated as his disorder has been, I consider the symptoms which have manifested themselves to be in no slight degree alarming, if aught indeed may be so named which promises to relieve the weary pilgrim from the loathed thralldom of this cheerless world.”

The air of resigned devotion with which he spoke was too exquisitely acted to allow his sincerity to be doubted.

“ Wisely,” said Lord Erpingham, “ do

you direct our thoughts to those sublime subjects of contemplation which, in the hour of distress, more than reconcile man to his fate, and sustaining by immortal hope, lift him above his present destiny."

"Aye," said Ferdinand, with solemnity but with a seeming eagerness for speech which was unusual with him, "such hope will indeed lift man above his fate. Happy is he who can cherish it. But even of those who profess to do so, I fear, holy sir, that many sin against the truth, and that, affecting piety to cover crime, they but invite deeper damnation than might overtake humbler pretensions."

The impressive energy and strong feeling with which Ferdinand spoke, startled the monk. Conscience told him that such a speech might with propriety be addressed to him in reference to his own conduct, and fear whispered that by some incomprehensible means he might have become acquainted with that

which he had persuaded himself was then and would ever remain a profound secret. Lord Erpingham noticed the surprise of the ecclesiastic, and thought it right to speak in explanation of the remark which had caused it.

“ You look, father, as if you supposed some particular object had been adverted to : such is not the case ; but Ferdinand is too apt to suffer his contemplation to dwell on the crimes of those who disgrace their nature and their name.”

“ Surely, my Lord,” Ferdinand remarked, “ such exposition was unnecessary ? The pious minister of Heaven your Lordship cannot suppose has any reason for thinking my remark other than general.”

This speech did any thing but diminish the alarm previously inspired. The tone with which he declared the abbot could have no reason to consider the remark he had made other than general, was given with an emphasis that seemed

ironical. He was far from being disposed patiently to endure that affronting inuendos, thrown out in his presence, should remain unanswered; but he feared to express what he felt, and judged, at all events, that it would be wisdom not to risk hastening exposure by braving the perils of explanation. There was indeed a monk, William de Broke, who had on a former day accompanied him to Fickett's fields, and who, while he himself was in attendance on Lord Erpingham, had conversed with Ferdinand. He could have told much; but his depravity was so well ascertained that Egbert thought on that he could securely depend. But still the abbot's embarrassment was great in the extreme. Disconcerted by what had already been said, and trembling for that which might follow, he was at a loss for a reply, and hardly dared to look on one who had, as it appeared to him, not scrupled to

hold the language of indignant accusation.

While Egbert was thus doubtful what course to take, a note was brought to Lord Erpingham. The peer desired to see the bearer, and retired for that purpose.

It would be difficult to say whether Egbert was more relieved or terrified by this incident. He found himself alone with Ferdinand; and though, on the one hand, he was glad that what he might say should be uttered in the absence of Lord Erpingham, on the other, he suspected that the presence which before sheltered him from open reproach being no longer interposed in his behalf, the moment was arrived when all which he most dreaded to listen to would be poured into his ear. Yet it could not be that William de Broke would betray him; and that the intelligence of which he feared Ferdinand was possessed could

be derived from any other informant seemed nearly impossible.

Ferdinand, the moment Lord Erpingham retired, again accosted the priest:—

“ You, sir, by virtue of your holy office, know much of the human heart, and I solicit no breach of confidence reposed in you, when I ask, comes it not within your knowledge that there are those who, schooled in dissimulation through a long series of years, cheat their fellows by pretending that their meditations and hopes are always fixed on heaven, though conscious of having violated the most sacred duties on earth? Give me answer.”

Egbert stammered, with increased confusion, — “ The question — the question is so unexpected — that — I — guess not what motive can prompt the asking of it.”

“ And what has my motive to do with your reply? The question you might answer, methinks, with little hesitation.”

The ecclesiastic paused. His eyes were fixed on those of Ferdinand, as if he sought to read the naked thought as it flitted from the brain, before it could be clothed in speech.

“Have you known none such?” demanded the persevering Ferdinand.

“In the course of my life it may be that such melancholy instances of frailty have come before me.”

“Can you, as the teacher of holy truth, speak doubtfully on such a subject?”

“I think that which I have already said amounts to an admission.”

“Then tell me,” he continued, raising his voice, “is not that soul doomed to perdition, cut off from salvation hereafter, and its owner entitled to no forbearance here, which could deliberately resolve to immolate innocence and matchless beauty on the altar of sordid lust, nor seek to preserve that tender existence of which he himself was the author?”

A ghastly paleness invaded the cheek

of Egbert. He attempted no reply, but shrunk back with undisguised trepidation.

“ I see,” said Ferdinand, “ that the bare mention of crimes like these has almost overwhelmed you with horror.”

Terror had wrought conviction on the mind of Egbert that he had been betrayed. In the hurry of the moment he forgot that his design against Mariana was so recently formed, that it was impossible Ferdinand could have received positive information on the subject from any one. The warmth with which her relation had spoken confirmed his worst fears; and he endeavoured to appease in some degree the storm, which his terrified imagination suggested, was about to burst with tremendous fury on his head.

“ It is not so. By heaven, no attempt — not the slightest — has been made.”

“ Of what do you speak ?” enquired Ferdinand.

This question, though it did not dispel

Egbert's fears, awoke a hope that there might be some mistake. He was too artful to give a direct answer to the question, by uttering that name which, in his confusion at first had nearly escaped from his lips ; and he ventured on a question.

“ I would ask to what your speech referred ? ”

“ I would not suspect you of duplicity, father,” said Ferdinand ; “ but if you can regard my interrogatories as put with allusion to any particular individual whom I may now have in my eye, surely the case is too monstrous to be other than singular.”

The language of Ferdinand was not very consoling, but there was that in his manner which encouraged a belief that the indignation Egbert had supposed directed against himself, was in truth called forth by another offender. Who that could be, did not appear. He knew Lord Erpingham to be sincerely

virtuous and humane, and had heard of no one connected with his Lordship to whom the character drawn by Ferdinand could belong. Emboldened by the tranquil and not hostile tone which he now remarked, he risked an assertion which was equivalent to putting that question, the answer to which he impatiently panted to gain, but trembled to hear.

“ It is my hope that no such weakness — that no such crime — can be proved against any member of the church ; — that no ecclesiastic can have so far forgotten his duty.”

“ No, holy sir, that would be a perfection in sin which I believe has not yet been attained. I have no suspicion that the church is disgraced by one so lost.”

Egbert felt as though a new existence had been bestowed, when Ferdinand thus unequivocally declared that it was not towards him that suspicion pointed ;

but he trembled when he reflected how nearly his own speech had betrayed him. Self-reproach, not for crimes committed, but for the disclosure which startled conscience had almost made, was strong in his bosom. He despised himself for the weakness which had endangered him, but hastened to repair the error, and to act the serene and holy teacher of truth.

“ I am shocked,” he said, “ at the bare idea of transgressions like those which you have imagined, but must confess that there are men, who, professing much piety, are strangely misled.”

“ The reflection is melancholy, and I have sometimes wondered why temptations, powerful as those which seduce from virtue, should beset the path of beings so weak as we are.”

“ Doubtless these are designed to try us. If severe the ordeal, remember how vast the reward which heaven holds out to triumphant righteousness. Privations are painful ; but then, how sweetly sustain-

ing the reflection that every day brings the pious heart nearer to its everlasting resting place, — nearer to the prize on which its dreams, its thoughts, and sacred hopes, are fixed !”

Lord Erpingham entered.

“ You may marvel,” he said, “ that I have so long delayed ; but one has been with me, charged with a message from a learned serjeant, praying me that I will in no case fail to be at a noble repast which he and his brethren shall give to-morrow, at which he has been told to look for the presence of the king, who has, so I am informed, expressed desire for my attendance.”

“ Then fortify your faith, my Lord, and muster well your courage ; for now that he hath cut off Sir Thomas More, it may be that the king would see you presiding over affairs of state. Therefore must you be wary, or your soul shall be in danger of falling to the blandishments of the heretic, or your head of

being cut off by the sword of the executioner."

" I trust, holy father, I shall not want firmness to act up to the principles which I have avowed, feeling, as I do, that it were far better that this head should presently be neighbour to that of my dear friend Sir Thomas, which but yesterday I sighed to view on London Bridge, than that I should fail in what I owe to Heaven."

Lord Erpingham then craved spiritual aid from the ecclesiastic, to prepare him for the interview he contemplated. In giving the assistance desired, which Egbert did with all his wonted solemnity, he failed not from time to time to touch on temporal matters, and especially to hint that godly avengers might yet arise, and that speedily, to bend the neck of the stubborn Pharaoh who oppressed the church, and whose heresy, he did not scruple to hint, went, in his judgment, to annihilate his right to reign in England.

Though Lord Erpingham was not prepared to acquiesce in the demands which King Henry made on the consciences of his subjects, he was unwilling to go the lengths which, it should seem from what Egbert had said, others thought justifiable. He expressed both displeasure and surprise at what he had heard, but exercises of devotion soon superseded politics.

CHAP. VI.

Sternly he pronounced
The rigid interdiction, which resounds
Yet dreadful in mine ear." MILTON.

THE terrors which had for a moment disturbed Egbert were no more. He had prepared the way for completing his triumph by the destruction of Edmund ; and secure from interruption and discovery, no relenting weakness was likely to interfere with the execution of his purpose.

Confined in the dungeon to which he had been conducted, Edmund expected no relief but from death. To this he could have reconciled his mind, but the thoughts which had been inspired by the last words of Egbert disturbed him infinitely more than any apprehension of

suffering in his own person could by possibility have done. Imagination placed before him the figure of Mariana, not such as he had once seen her, wearing the cheerful glow of health and innocence, but the pale, weeping, expiring victim of a remorseless hypocrite.

He endeavoured to calm the tumult in his mind, by reflecting that it was his duty to submit with resignation to the Divine will. But reason indignantly took arms at the thought, and insisted, that it were little better than blasphemy to regard as such the sanguinary decree of a wretch who outraged all laws, whether human or divine. The right to resist he felt assured was his, but he in vain looked for the means: the walls of his prison were not to be shaken by his rage; and the iron-guarded door was not to be forced by anguish or despair.

Once a day he was supplied with bread and water. They were brought by William de Broke. This man seemed well fitted

for the duty imposed upon him, or which he had voluntarily taken upon himself. He was rather tall in stature, and much resembled, as well in form as in height, the prisoner to whom he was appointed to administer. His hair was flaxen, and his countenance, which was ever of a ghastly paleness, had formerly been handsome, but had now an expression of calm obduracy, more distinctly indicative of a malignant heart than the ordinary characteristics of stormy ferocity would have been. He looked as if his blood, suddenly arrested in its course, had at once checked or annihilated the current of those feelings which animate the mass of mankind ; and retaining the form of a mortal, but dead to all the sympathies of life, those who looked on him might almost believe that an envious fiend had escaped from another world to deride the miseries, and to outrage the feelings, of sufferers in this.

His character described, it is almost superfluous to picture the feelings with which he regarded Edmund. To see a youth who might have revelled in all the luxuries of life, in a situation so deplorable as that which he had daily opportunities of witnessing, excited in him a sensation approaching the nearest to delight of any that he was yet capable of knowing. So great was the treat, that he could not observe the injunctions laid upon him, which were to place the sordid aliments of which he was the bearer before the prisoner in silence, and retire with all expedition. William paused each time that he came, as if he wanted resolution to abstain from feasting his eyes on affliction so exquisite.

“Your steadfast gaze is fixed on me,” said Edmund, one day : “it may be that you have some touch of humanity, and would fain relieve a suffering fellow-man.”

“And how, my crest-fallen gentle, can that be done?”

“ Or by enabling me to pass from this dreary abode, or by conveying true intelligence to Lord Erpingham of the treatment I have received.”

“ To what purpose ?”

“ To the end that he being so apprised of my peril and distress, may use such means as his discretion may suggest to procure my enlargement, so that I may bring the guilty chief of this fraternity to account for his misdoings, and save one whose destruction he now meditates from the toils which he prepares.

“ A wish so just and modest,” William replied, “ shall meet with all the attention it deserves. But, ere more speech is wasted, tell me this ; how shall my doing what you desire tend to my own singular pleasure or advancement ?”

“ A higher reward than even kings could bestow, will be his who rescues a fellow-creature from unmerited punishment and death.”

“ Your piety no doubt refers to heaven.

That is in verity a high reward; but since the enterprise promises me nought on earth —”

“Nay, but it is not so. Lord Erpingham shall largely requite your timely aid with gold or land; and all his influence, which many know has not been small, shall be exerted to procure for you the best promotion which you would crave in church or state.”

Though it was impossible for William to feel compassion, he was not wholly unmoved by the appeal which Edmund now made to his avarice and ambition. The name of Lord Erpingham gave weight to the promises of the captive; and if they did not decide William to labour for his benefit, they occasioned him some perplexity, and he at least judged it worth while to dissemble for the present.

“The thing you ask, whatever my inclination may be, is passing difficult.”

“Heed not difficulty where more than

life is at stake ; for, God is my judge, I view existence but as a feather in the scale, compared with the sacrilegious outrage in another place, now contemplated by Egbert.”

“ I understand you ; but when you counsel that I should not heed difficulty, you advise that I should expose myself to frightful peril without serving you. Small were the chance, if I conveyed you hence by the winding passage towards the refectory, that I could unobserved in broad day conduct you thence, and along the corridor leading therefrom to the yard, and thence by the lodge to the open street, without being observed.”

“ It would be madness to suppose that this may be done. But can you devise no other means ? Favoured by night, might not that be practicable, which by day is hopeless ? ”

“ By night, locks, bars, and bolts, must be encountered. Yet a thought occurs to me : I have imagined a mode in which

I might accomplish all you desire; but then gold, present gold, were needed."

"Alas! I have none. Little deeming that gold would ever be desirable within these walls, I brought no wealth with me."

"Bethink thee well. Perhaps some valuables may remain to you, the possession of which you remember not at this moment, or you may be able to point out the means of obtaining a prompt supply. But I must not tarry now, or it may be suspected that we have intelligence together."

He withdrew, and left Edmund in doubt, but yet disposed to believe that, as he had found one disposed to lend a favourable ear to his representations, means might be devised to regain liberty.

William, in the mean time, far from desiring to impart comfort to a sufferer, exulted that he had inspired a hope which he could rudely blast at his pleasure. But the bribe held out to him

was too splendid not to merit consideration. In him premature decay had inspired sincere hatred of the world ; nor could he without doing some violence to his feelings, save a guiltless man from a ferocious enemy. He might however, have made this sacrifice, had the task been less difficult ; but when he reflected on the risk to be encountered, — on the vengeance of which he must become the object in the event of failure, — and further, when he considered that Edmund when at large might be incapable of making his promises good, he was not long in arriving at the conclusion that it was better to secure the joy of inflicting additional torture on the ill-fated prisoner, than to expose himself to the consequences of being known to favour the meditated escape.

Edmund awaited his return on the following day with impatience. William at length entered, and the captive eagerly demanded if he had imagined the means

of accomplishing the object which he opposed him to have at heart."

"I could desire to know if you have discovered any way of conquering the difficulty which I yesterday mentioned, as opposed to your enlargement."

"Alas! no. I have a ring with a jewel in it, which I wore when I came to the monastery, and which, though I ceased to wear it, I have by accident borne about my person."

"This," said William, as he received it, "is of some value. Have you nought beside?"

"Nothing; but on my liberation large funds shall be placed at your command."

"Indeed! May that be depended upon?"

"Assuredly."

"Then, nothing remains but that I inform you all doubt may at once terminate."

"You speak with unexpected heart-sustaining confidence."

“I do; for trust me, but few days shall elapse before you pass hence.”

“And by what means will my release be effected?”

“Your release — moderate your joy, for I see it is not small; — your release shall be effected — by death.”

Edmund drew back, unable to conceal the horror which the perfidy of the monk inspired.

“Yes, fool,” the latter continued; “beneath his icy touch the restraint at which you repine will terminate. But hope not that it shall otherwise find an end.”

“Thy will be done!” exclaimed Edmund, without looking on the wretch who mocked him, and endeavouring to raise his thoughts with humble resignation to the Deity.

“Having addressed your first prayer to me,” cried William, “you now send the remnant of your petition to heaven. What bribe will you offer there? I hope

it will be something better than the poor ring which was your offering to me."

"What may this import?" cried a voice behind.

William turned his head, and saw father Egbert.

"You are strangely moved," the abbot remarked. "What is the occasion?"

"But this; the pious Edmund, whom you recently surprised attempting to escape, has been bribing me to afford him the means of making a new effort."

Egbert made no reply, but entering the cell, looked suspiciously round. Then, without offering comment on what he had heard, he retired, carefully inspecting the fastenings as he withdrew.

Thenceforward, as often as William de Broke came to the cell, he indulged the malignity of his heart by venting scornful taunts and bitter reproaches on the prisoner. He reviled him as a spy who sought but to betray the community of

which he had desired to become a member, and never failed to wind up his insulting speech with the declaration that death would soon terminate for ever his projects for escaping.

Edmund seldom replied to the coarse insolence of which he was the object ; but absorbed as he was in grief for the perils to which he knew Mariana must be exposed, he felt indignant at the active cruelty which the heartless mockeries of William incessantly pressed on his attention. One day his persecutor was enjoying the accustomed treat, when a thought occurred to the prisoner that it was in his power to chastise the outrages he had sustained, and this was promptly followed by another, that if he succeeded in this, more might be attempted. The paleness of sickness and despondency which had taken possession of a countenance recently the seat of florid health, convinced William de Broke that the dissolution of Edmund was rapidly ap-

proaching. He considered him to be much more enfeebled than he really was: and great was his confusion, when he saw the supposed dying man spring forward with sudden fury, to grasp his person with a show of vigour which he was in no condition to resist. After an ineffectual struggle, he fell, and not till then did Edmund relax his hold: The first use which the prostrate monk made of the power of speech, now restored to him, was to implore mercy. Sad as Edmund was at heart, he could not but feel a momentary joy when this sound from the trembling lips of his persecutor vibrated on his ear.

“What!” he exclaimed, “canst thou call for mercy?” I deemed thou hadst wholly forgotten the word: come what may, I shall never regret the work of this moment, which has so suddenly reduced the unfeeling tyrant to the condition of a suppliant.

Shame sat on the face of the terrified

wretch, and rage glared in his faded eyes; but he made no effort to rise: he remembered the night when he had seen Edmund struggling in the vault with Egbert, and knowing that the life even of the abbot, had then been menaced, he doubted not that his own would be in danger if he ventured to exasperate by reproach.

“ Rise,” said Edmund.

William obeyed in silence.

“ Now doff thy cloak and hood.”

“ What would you? O spare me! I have already sufficiently felt your resentment.”

“ I would have your cloak and hood,” said Edmund; “ for in them I wish presently to pass from this accursed abode. My garment is damp and discoloured, from the vile confinement to which I have been subjected. Doff without delay.”

William divested himself of his habit. In doing so he gradually approached the door of the dungeon.

“Not so far that way,” cried Edmund: “I desire to stand between you and the outlet from the cell, since you must for a time be the prisoner instead of the jailer.”

“O spare me! — the damp and fœtid vapours of these vaults I cannot brave, even for a few minutes, with impunity. To confine me here for any extended period would be to doom me to destruction.”

“The lives of better men have been thus sacrificed, and though in your case destruction both of soul and body were inevitable, here should you remain.”

“Nay, spare me!”

“Peace!”

“You are urged on by madness: it is impossible for you to find the way alone.”

“I am urged on by despair; and for the way, though I know it not, you can direct me.”

A momentary gleam of exultation illum-

inated the cadaverous visage of the monk ; and he replied, —

“ I will direct you.”

“ And see you speak truly. On my escape I know my life depends, and so perchance may yours ; for if I fail, (I mean through any treacherous falsehood of yours,) then mark my words, — I am not without a weapon, and I will not perish alone.”

While he spoke he displayed a knife, which he had secreted on the day preceding his attempt to escape. William shrunk back ; and Edmund having attired himself in the garments of his persecutor, and received from him what he averred to be a true description of the path which he must take, left the cell, taking excellent care to secure the door.

CHAP. VII.

—— vaine hope (which hope, sayth Euripides destroyeth manye a man and citty) driveth him on so farre, that he can never returne backe. ASCHAM.

FOR a moment Edmund hesitated whether or not to pass by the way which William had described ; but when he recalled the solemn asseverations of the monk, and the shuddering alarm which he had inspired, he was disposed to believe that he had been told the truth.

Whatever the peril of going forward might be, it was quite clear that it could not be greater than that to which he must be exposed by remaining where he was. He had little time for deliberation, as it was probable that the continued absence of the monk would soon be noticed. If he decided to go forward, detection was probable, but it was absolutely certain if he hesitated.

Impressed with this conviction, he explored the narrow way which led from his cell. He soon reached a stone-staircase, and remembering to have ascended steps when he was conducted to his dungeon, he felt satisfied that he had not been deceived by William. Having passed down them, he saw two other flights of steps. Edmund was at a loss which of these to prefer; but reflecting that in the situation in which he found himself ill-timed caution was more to be feared than even the wildest precipitation, he took that to which he first came. He saw an open door, and this encouraged a hope that he was in the track which William had just pursued. He drew his cowl so as to shroud his face, and entered the apartment to which the door led. This was a circular Gothic room fitted up as a chapter-house, which had in former times been the place where the brotherhood assembled to deliberate on matters affecting the church in

general, or their own order in particular. The ceiling was lofty, and divided by grooved arches, the points of which met in the centre. Light was admitted by a painted window, divided into three compartments, in which the Crucifixion was represented. The Saviour was in the centre ; and on his right the penitent malefactor seemed about to expire, while an angel approached to take charge of his soul. On the left, the soul of the hardened sinner, just issuing from his mouth, was already clasped by the talons of a hovering fiend of darkness. Beneath, a chair with an ascent of one step was placed, over which an enormously thick octagon sounding-board, projected from the wall in which benches to the right and left of the chair were fixed. In front of the seat prepared for the superior, and nearly in the centre of the room, stood a circular oaken table. It had twelve legs or supporters at equal distances from each other ; each of which

presented a carved representation of one of the apostles, and formed the side of a small pointed arch. No person was there ; and the chapter house seemed to have been much neglected of late through the disorders in the monastery, which had superseded the ancient discipline. The dust had been suffered to accumulate, the rain had penetrated the roof, and the benches and chair appeared almost falling from long disuse, and want of repair.

Edmund glanced hastily at the apartment, and believed that he had mistaken the way ; but reluctant to retrace his steps, on perceiving a door leading from the chapter, he determined on going wherever that might conduct him. He found himself in a small closet which seemed to be an anti-room, or robing place to the chapter-house. By this he reached a passage through which he rapidly advanced, and now for the first time he heard voices. The sound of his

own name he was once persuaded struck on his ear, but he listened in vain for its repetition.

The passage was gloomy, but a ray of daylight at the further extremity announced that he approached the refectory. He had hitherto retained the lamp, but he now extinguished it, and placed it on the ground. He again advanced. Several monks were in the apartment through which he must of necessity pass : the moment of detection was perhaps at hand ; but it was in vain to go back, or to pause. He drew the cowl closer to conceal his features, and entered the room from which the voices proceeded.

“ You have made long stay,” said one of the monks, and Edmund recognised the voice of the brother who with William had secured him on the night when he made his first attempt to escape. He took no notice of the remark, but crossed towards the opposite door, when the same voice demanded, —

“ What made you tarry ? Did you find your charge dying, and anxious to be confessed before you left him ? ”

“ No,” said Edmund, in a tone little above a whisper.

“ But why are you thus shrouded ? ” enquired the other. “ What made this muffling needful ? ”

“ Damp and cold,” Edmund replied ; and now having gained the door, he stepped into the corridor. He passed the cell in which he had once reposed, and hastened forward without looking behind, when he saw a monk coming towards him, whose eyes were suspiciously fixed on him. Edmund quickened his pace ; and anxious to avert the enquiries to which he feared he might be subjected, he judged that it would be no bad policy to speak first. He accordingly demanded, —

“ Where is Father Egbert ? ”

“ He is just gone forth.”

“ I must follow,” he replied ; and the

suspicion of the monk, if he entertained any, set at rest by the manner in which he had been accosted, prompted no further speech.

Edmund had now reached the termination of the corridor, and was about descending the steps which led to the parlour, whence he hoped, by affecting eagerness to overtake father Egbert, to get to the porter's lodge, when he was challenged,

“ Whither so fast, I pray ?”

“ Where is Father Egbert ?”

“ He passed but now ; and is by this gone forth.”

“ I must after him.”

“ You are too late. He is already gone, and you may not to the parlour while he is absent.”

“ But he may be there now. Heard you not his speech ?”

This question Edmund put with a confident tone, in the hope of vanquish-

ing opposition to his progress. The monk listened, but no sound was heard.

“There!” exclaimed Edmund: “heard you not again? You cannot be deaf?”

“By the mass!” cried the monk, “you are right.”

Much did Edmund exult in the success of this artifice; and the faint hope which he had previously cherished now ripened into sanguine expectation. No fear remained, when the monk added,—

“Go on: I hear him distinctly.”

In the midst of the anxiety by which his mind was torn, Edmund could not but smile at the positive manner in which the person he sought to deceive averred that he distinguished in the parlour the voice of one who must at that moment be at a considerable distance from the monastery. But he was thus amused but for a very few instants. He was about to profit by the supposed successful effort at deception, when he himself most distinctly heard the voice of father

Egbert. At this well known sound he involuntarily shrunk back, with an expression of confusion and dismay.

“ Pass forward,” said the brother who had detained him : “ he has returned for something that has been forgotten. You are in time.

“ I too have forgotten what I ought to have remembered, and will return,” Edmund replied, in a low hurried tone, expecting even while he spoke to be recognized.

He turned to retrace his steps. But again to pass unnoticed, or undiscovered, was in his judgment almost impossible ; and if he could accomplish this, even then the prospect of escape would be as remote as ever.

But Egbert was now in the corridor. Edmund perceived that his suspicious glance already rested on him, and attempted to retreat.

“ Whither speed ye, William ?” cried the abbot, who recognised the habit, and,

as he thought, the figure of William de Broke.

Affecting not to hear him, Edmund walked away, without venturing to answer.

“Why sought you me?” the latter demanded. “For what did you desire to follow me?”

“It boots not now,” said Edmund, constrained to risk an answer. He spoke in a low tone, as before, and in a voice not unlike, so he persuaded himself, to that of William.

But the first sound that fell from his lips startled Egbert, whose curiosity had been excited by the manner in which Edmund strove to avoid him.

“Hold!” he exclaimed, in an authoritative tone: “that hood may be prudently drawn close around thy visage when abroad, but such precaution is here more than is needful; therefore remove it straight.”

He waited not for compliance with

this mandate, but withdrew the cowl with his own hands, and at once saw that he had not experienced a vain alarm.

“Wretch!” thundered Egbert, “thou art again defeated. By what base artifice of thine, or treacherous connivance of another, do I find thee here?”

“You find me here,” Edmund replied, “from having made me desperate enough by your villainy to attempt any thing, that could by possibility lead to an escape.”

Egbert turned pale with rage, while he reflected how nearly his captive had succeeded in regaining his liberty.

“And who—who,” said he, “is the traitor by whose perfidious aid you are enabled to make these repeated attempts? Who is your accomplice?”

“I have none.”

“That is incredible. You could not have been here had not some accom-

plice favoured your endeavours to pass from the monastery.”

“Whatever has been done this day has been done without voluntary aid from any one, as you will soon know.”

“Secure our common enemy,” cried Egbert to the monks, whom the sound of his voice had brought to the spot.

The order was promptly obeyed. Edmund expected nothing less : but he shrunk back with disgust and indignation, when he found that the foremost to assist in securing him was no other than his former friend Nicholas Bray.

Edmund was re-conducted to the cell from which he had fled. The door was opened, and William saw with unmixed exultation, the prisoner returned to his dungeon. Savage joy for a moment gave unwonted brightness to his faded eye, while in the fulness of his satisfaction he triumphantly demanded, —

“Well, my gay gallant, have you enjoyed the same fool’s chase on which

but now you were so intent? Trust me, I began to think you long, and joy to see you are at last returned."

"Peace, villain!" said Edmund, without deigning to look on him."

"You will now," resumed William, "perhaps have no objection to give back my habit, since your old one seeing you are not going abroad, may serve for your wear in this blythe abode."

While speaking, William observed not that he sustained the stern enquiring regards of the abbot. He looked round, to catch the malignant smile which he calculated his heartless taunts would not fail to call forth, when he saw with surprise, though with little apprehension, the angry scowl of Egbert, whose voice was now raised to address him.

"Peradventure, it may be well," he said, "that instead of trifling with him, you prepare to answer me. How has it chanced, that the offender confided to

your care, has passed from that strict confinement to which he was destined?"

William recounted the manner of Edmund's flight, exaggerating somewhat in the description which he gave of his own efforts to oppose him.

"This tale," said Egbert, "may to some appear to be the very truth; but for me I scruple not to say I hold it to be utterly incredible."

The languid visage of William was distorted with emotion, which extended to his whole frame, at finding that the narration which he had given was not credited.

"What — what mean you?" he wildly enquired. "Can it be thought that I would from choice become the inhabitant of this place, to liberate another?"

"Wily as you are known to be, it is little likely that you should so far forget the rules of common prudence, as to place yourself in a prisoner's power."

"I thought — I expected not —"

“Had this been so, it is still little likely that, brought hither as this same refractory stripling was, blinded and through circuitous ways, he could have passed to where it was my hap to find him, without direction from you.”

A murmur of assent to this remark escaped from the brethren who were present. Egbert proceeded:—

“When it is seen that Edmund has passed through paths which were not known to him before; when I behold him attired in your garment, and find you clad in his; he endeavouring to make his way through the monastery, you quietly remaining in his prison; to what conclusion can I come but this, that you are his accomplice?”

Amazement and agonising terror almost withdrew from the accused wretch the power of uttering a single word. He looked on the abbot while he spoke with a disordered vacant stare, but faltered when he would have replied,

in a manner which to his examiners seemed to proceed from inability to give a satisfactory reply. On this Egbert commented :—

“ You seek in vain for a plausible excuse ; and when I further bethink me of the conversation which I partially heard on a former day between you and the prisoner, doubt can scarcely choose but give way to certainty — to the certainty of your being a traitor. Therefore, since you have chosen this abode for yourself, even remain in it till you can give some proof that you have not acted the part I believe you to have acted.”

“ Nay, hear me,” cried William, shuddering at the idea of seeing the dungeon-door closed on him a second time, and of being confined with Edmund.

“ You will be heard ere long,” replied Egbert ; “ for into this business enquiry shall speedily be made. In the mean time, here you must tarry, to plan, if

such your pleasure, some new means of enabling a treacherous offender to go forth to the world which he pretended to forswear."

While speaking, he withdrew: William attempted to follow, but the interposing door prevented him; and, regardless of his vehement asseverations of innocence, and frantic supplications for mercy, he was again left in that dungeon which he had so often visited for the purpose of mocking the sorrows of his fellow-prisoner.

CHAP. VIII.

—— the chilling ice of death

Congeals my blood, and chokes the stream of breath.

FALCONER.

A VARIETY of circumstances tended to produce conviction in the mind of Egbert, that William had connived at the attempted escape. The alarm which he had experienced from the singular language of Ferdinand made a deep impression on his mind ; and though he subsequently dismissed his suspicions with his fears, the way was left so open for their return, that the slightest circumstance was capable of reviving them. The conversation between William and Edmund, which he had partially overheard, seemed to warrant the idea that the former was disposed to negotiate.

The difficulties which Edmund had actually surmounted were such as he did not believe he could conquer without aid ; and the splendid promises which he could make, with a prospect of their being realized, were certainly more than sufficient to inflame the cupidity of William de Broke.

Having arrived at this conclusion, the next thing to be considered was the way in which it might be proper to dispose of the offender, so as effectually to withdraw from him the means of being dangerous, without alarming others for their own safety. His arbitrary will had sent Edmund to a dungeon ; but it was necessary to use more ceremony with a monk who stood in the situation of William. Edmund had from the first been viewed with alarm : the sincerity of his piety threatened an exposure of the profligacy of the monks, and all were rejoiced when the decisive step of making him a prisoner was decided upon. Egbert

feared, that if of himself he took the same course in the present case, it might be viewed with jealousy. He therefore was anxious that the punishment to be inflicted on William should be the act of the fraternity, and for this purpose he determined on forthwith holding a chapter.

A few hours sufficed for completing the necessary preparation. The abbot's chair and the table were covered with black cloth, the benches were hastily fitted up with matting, and the same material was spread over the damp marble pavement. The whole of the brethren being required to attend, the accused was brought before them with as much solemnity as if the ancient rules of the order had never been violated or forgotten, and as if it were determined to uphold the principles on which the institution had been founded, in all their original purity.

Egbert called upon the assembly to

give the case their most careful consideration. He recalled to their recollection the circumstances of suspicion which appeared against the supposed offender. He expatiated with eloquence on the enormity of the treason which laboured to give freedom to a malcontent, whose representations to those in power would be likely to withdraw from them all the advantages of which they had hitherto been in secure possession, and effect the annihilation of the order itself. He finally left it for them to resolve, after hearing what might be offered in extenuation or defence, whether guilt was proved, and if this were established, to determine what punishment ought to be awarded against their common foe.

William vindicated himself by referring to his general course of life, which certainly was not such as to warrant any violent suspicion of humanity. He further directed their attention to the exultation which he had manifested on

seeing Edmund brought back to the dungeon, and, finally, desired them to appeal to the prisoner himself, and judge from the answers he might give, whether he had received any aid from him.

To this Egbert replied, that he much deceived himself if he judged that the chapter were to be imposed upon by a ridiculous tale of affected joy, acted to avert enquiry, when he found that the plan which he had abetted had failed. That his general career had not been marked by extraordinary benevolence afforded no presumption that he was not open to the influence of avarice, but since he wished that Edmund should be called before the chapter, as his examination might in some way elicit the truth, there could be no objection to that, though what he might state ought to be listened to with extreme caution.

The dungeon door was again opened for Edmund to pass forth, and he soon found himself in that apartment which

he had entered in the morning, and which he had little dreamed he should so soon see restored to its ancient use, or something resembling it, in form. Nicholas Bray was one of those who attended him from the cell to the chapter. On the way he found an opportunity of whispering the purpose for which Edmund was wanted, and added, —

“Now make the caitiff smart. If he refused to aid you, swear all was done by his assistance, and be revenged.”

Edmund heeded not this admonition. Interrogated by Egbert, he answered the questions which were asked without any reference to the persecution which he had sustained, and consequently his replies tended to the exculpation of the accused.

“But say,” cried Egbert, “if he did not plan your escape, did he not solace your confinement, with conversation or otherwise?”

“He did not.”

“ Has he never conversed with you ? ”

“ He has.”

“ And to what purpose ? ”

“ Evidently but with a view of torturing a wounded spirit, and of exulting over calamity.”

“ Did he in no instance deviate into kindness ? ”

“ Never, but to mock the credulity which listened to him, and to crush the hope which he inspired.”

“ Hope, then,” said Egbert, “ he did inspire ? ”

“ He did, by affecting to listen to the entreaties I preferred, that he might afterwards insult the weakness of him who supposed him to possess the feelings of a man.”

The features of William were lighted up with exultation, while answers according so well both with the truth, and with what he wished to hear stated, were given by the witness. Egbert proceeded ; —

“ Then it is your intent here to declare,

that he in nowise aided your views, or consented to your flight?"

"This I aver. If no other charge can be preferred against him, by my soul, he is innocent."

"And this you can fearlessly state as the truth?"

"I can. If to have a heart of flint be virtue, there exists not under heaven a more perfect being than William de Broke."

"You speak decisively."

"And feel as I speak. If you want a villain whose soul is impervious to mercy or compassion, cherish William as an invaluable treasure."

"Remember you have promised to speak veritably."

"I have not forgotten my promise, nor am I fearful of violating it, when I again declare, that where a reckless callous wretch is of value, this miscreant is above all price. The rage that stabs with sudden fury is gentle and bene-

volent, when compared with the serene cruelty, and cold-blooded barbarity of him who has been so unjustly suspected of pity."

Edmund was then removed : Bray attended him to his dungeon. They were not alone, but he again found an opportunity of speaking without being observed.

" We are undone. Your mad-headed love of truth has saved the miscreant you might have destroyed. Truth is a marvellous good thing, but it is not for all times,"

Edmund made no reply, but entered his prison in silence.

The chapter proceeded to decide on the case before them.

Foolish as it might appear to Nicholas Bray for Edmund to answer as he did, and fortunate as William de Broke was inclined to consider himself in finding a witness so much to his purpose, what was stated did not make on the tribunal before

which he stood, exactly that impression on which he and the jester calculated. Though William, conscious that Edmund had spoken no more than the truth, anticipated instantaneous acquittal, Egbert took a very different view of the subject. Accustomed to every species of hypocrisy himself, he was satisfied that any thing but a correct representation of William's conduct had been given by Edmund; and in the warmth with which the obduracy of William had been described, he thought he saw an artful attempt to save an accomplice, that he might continue to command his services. This he pointed out to the other members of the chapter, and they, unwilling to be outdone in sagacity by their principal, were not slow in agreeing that the energy with which Edmund had spoken, in reprobation of his jailer, marked an anxious desire that he should not be changed; and notwithstanding all the protestations which William could

make of his being perfectly guiltless of mercy, it was unanimously decided that he had lent himself to procure the enlargement of the prisoner.

It was in vain that the tear of anguish stole from the sunken eye of William, while thus unjustly condemned, he trembled before his indignant judges. His punishment was soon determined. Since he had been convicted of desiring to set free one whom it was the interest of the brotherhood to detain, the most fitting punishment seemed that to which he had been temporarily sentenced by Egbert ; and it was ordered that he should forthwith be returned to the society of his supposed accomplice.

This decision was promptly carried into execution ; and the frantic, despairing monk again became the companion of Edmund. It was no amelioration of the condition of the latter to be accommodated with such society. Though it was impossible for him not to be struck

with the manner in which the brutality of the monk had been requited, by him to whom it was likely to prove most acceptable, the dungeon became more loathsome when encumbered with his presence, and the bosom of Edmund was too much torn by apprehension for Mariana, to be capable of enjoying the luxury of vengeance.

For William, remembering how he had rejoiced in the sufferings of another, he expected to meet with the scornful reproaches of his companion, if not with greater outrage. While Edmund, occupied with his own griefs, paced the cell, the eyes of his late persecutor watched his steps with indescribable dread. He would fain have concealed himself, but the dungeon presented no recess in which he could bestow his wretched form, to escape for an instant the observation of his fellow-sufferer.

Egbert supplied his victims with a newly replenished lamp on each suc-

ceeding day. The bringer of it entered with his cowl so closely drawn over his face, that, with the exception of his eyes, no feature was visible to those whom he attended. Having deposited the lamp on the table, he placed by the side of it the scanty supply of food, and the water, which vindictive cruelty had not yet resolved to withhold. One person entered, but the footsteps of one, or more than one, might be heard without. On withdrawing, the monk carried with him the lamp which had expired, or which was nearly exhausted, and the sound of his voice was never heard. Though assailed by the importunate supplications of William, he on no occasion broke silence ; and when the almost frantic wretch prostrated himself before him to implore his good offices with father Egbert, it produced no effect, and he appeared only solicitous to gain the door without delay.

The agitation of William's mind co-

operating with the chilly and loathsome vapours of the dungeon, and acting on a constitution before impaired by sickness, inflamed the malady under which he laboured, and, shuddering with horror at the idea, he already believed that the hand of death was upon him. Having fallen from virtue, he had gloried in infidelity; and, while persuaded that the hour of his dissolution was still remote, he delighted to treat the mysteries of the faith he professed with blasphemous derision. In addition to the other sources of misery which he had now to deplore, the recollection of this came over him, and wrought disease to madness. Either the light of truth beamed awful conviction on the heart which before could doubt, or the enfeebled mind was open to delusions against which it could once protect itself; for the boasted reason, once the pride of William de Broke, could not sustain his courage in those sad hours which he believed, and

felt, were among the last which he should number on earth.

“ You are revenged,” he exclaimed to Edmund. In this hideous place I cannot survive. Why do you not exult in my fall ?”

“ The part you acted was a base one,” Edmund replied ; “ but, though in your fate I recognise the expiation demanded by a just Providence, I cannot exult — I cannot mock your sufferings, as you did mine.”

“ You need not. My own thoughts become tormenting fiends. They torture me to madness, and unite with disease to hurry me to perdition.”

“ It would be wise rather to indulge hopes of mercy. Doomed with myself to inevitable death — ”

“ How say you,” interrupted William ; “ is death inevitable ?”

“ I think so, for both. But it is absolutely certain that you, if not immediately relieved, must perish ere many days are fled.”

The wretched William, while mourning that death was at hand, had hoped to hear from his companion that the danger was less imminent than he had suspected. The dismal confirmation of his worst fears augmented his agitation, and diminished the chances of surviving which had previously existed. Now he attempted to supplicate the mercy of his long-forgotten Creator, but the mind, enthralled with earthly objects, in vain attempted to soar from the recollection of the guilty past, and the contemplation of the appalling present, to solicit mercy for the never-ending future. He abandoned the effort in despair. The idea of an indulgent Creator, prepared to welcome home the returning spirit with pardon and reward, occurred not to him : he thought but of a God of justice advancing in terrible array against the being who had perseveringly abused the existence lent to him, by scorn for his Maker, and hatred for his fellow-creatures.

His eyeballs glared on imagined spectres of hideous aspect, which waited to receive the fleeting soul, and the dungeon resounded with exclamations of horror, and shrieks of anguish.

From being an object of abhorrence, the sufferer became one of pity. But the efforts of Edmund to soothe, served only to augment the destroying fever which consumed the wretch. To meet with compassion where he merited execration, made recollected guilt appear to the troubled conscience of deeper dye than before, and convulsive starts and appalling throes hurried the miserable sinner to the verge of existence. Edmund surveyed with awe the last struggles of hopeless remorse, and bent over the convulsed sufferer, anxious to render any assistance which, circumstanced as he was, it might be practicable to afford.

CHAP. IX.

I've been surprised in an unguarded hour,
 But must not now go back : the love that lay
 Half smothered in my breast has broke through all
 Its weak restraints. ADDISON.

THROUGH the cloisters of the convent Mariana loved to wander alone. The gloom which prevailed was not so deep as to startle, but it was such as to invite solemn reflection, to which she wished with sincerity to bend her spirit. Here she often walked for hours, and perusing the monumental records which adorned the walls, felt soothed by the proofs they afforded, that grief however acute was but temporary, and that Heaven, when least kind to mortals, doomed them to know but a brief date of sorrow.

She was thus occupied one day when a loud burst of laughter from the chapel

at the extremity of the *double cloister* called off her attention from the objects by which it had been previously engrossed. It caused surprise to hear the sound of mirth in such a place ; but that surprise was not a little increased when she saw the prioress and a nun issue from it, still laughing with unrestrained gaiety.

Their merriment was suspended on perceiving Mariana, whom they now approached. The prioress perceived her amazement.

“ You seem confounded, sister Mariana,” she remarked, “ to find that laughter can obtain place in a religious establishment.”

“ The sound attracted my attention,” said Mariana, “ as somewhat unusual.”

“ But which may become familiar to you, if you are not cruel to yourself.”

“ That, madam, I fear is impossible. Laughter cannot restore a dear relation, and—”

“ And a still dearer lover, you would have added, if your candour or courage

had not failed you. That may be true ; but tolerable substitutes may be discovered to console the sorrowing vestal for both."

" Aye, madam, for hearts that know their duty, and which, trained to devotion in looking forward to future bliss, have already commenced their heaven on earth."

The prioress and the nun, her companion, looked at each other, and apparently found some difficulty in abstaining from a new fit of laughter. The superior, however, recovered the government of her countenance, and having subdued the insurrectionary mirth of her features, she spoke :

" Step you into the house, Catherine : I shall remain here awhile to bestow a little spiritual consolation on our young friend."

The nun laughed while the prioress spoke, and retired.

Mariana was not prepared to witness such levity, and her enquiring eyes were

directed towards the prioress, soliciting information. She did not wait long for it.

“ Child !” said the prioress, “ you still dare scarcely credit the evidence of your senses, so great is the wonder which has seized you at finding that all is not solemnity and gloom, as you had been led to fear, within these walls ; — but I told you, when you first came, that unexpected comfort might await you. You honestly avowed that you came not here from choice.”

“ I indeed must acknowledge that my feeble capacity never enabled me to comprehend the advantages of seclusion, so as to make me content to quit the world.”

“ And trust me,” returned the superior, with that winning air of kind assent which rarely fails to inspire confidence in the youthful mind, “ your case was mine. I saw the world in my youth, and loved its pleasures : these I re-

garded as the present bounty of the Creator, and could not persuade myself that it was virtue, — it rather seemed like insolent ingratitude, to spurn and affect to despise them.”

“ Indeed ! Were such ideas ever yours ? ”

“ They were.”

“ Such, also, I may own it now, mine have been ; — but I feared to dwell on the thought, much less to give it speech.”

“ We are told that higher joys are prepared for us in another state ; but these we cannot taste till we become superior to what we are now. To reject the pleasures which belong to our present condition, in contemplation of what may be ours hereafter, is in my judgment not less ridiculous than it would be to refuse the common aliment of mortals, from an over-anxious desire to gain the celestial nourishment, which the fabled nectar of the gods may be supposed to yield.”

“ I, madam, though I have anxiously striven to instruct myself better, have still reluctantly approached the conclusion, that to relinquish the comforts of life could not be needful where these might be enjoyed remote from sinful thoughts, and idle pleasures.”

“ Pleasures may be forbidden, and yet they may be such that it cannot be sinful to court them. Those objects which yield gratification it is natural for us to covet: we must of necessity do so ; and the thirst for these must have been designedly implanted in us by the Author of our creation.”

This reasoning was new to Mariana. The prioress was the last person on earth from whom she had expected it. Accustomed to hear how prone the Deity was to be moved to wrath by the unholy anxiety of mortals for terrestrial enjoyments, she trembled at the boldness which set at nought what she had regarded as the fundamental principle of religion ;

she had, indeed, found it impossible to subscribe to it so cordially as she had wished ; but it startled her to hear the thoughts, which she had trembled to indulge even for an instant, fearlessly avowed and defended.

The prioress marked the effect produced by her words ; but it was too late to dissemble, and she resolved on going on to convince Mariana of the propriety of that which she appeared disposed to question.

“ I say,” she continued, “ that we can only desire what Heaven teaches is befitting our station here ; and if it be sinful to cherish such desires, it is criminal to breathe.”

Mariana offered no reply.

“ Dismiss,” said the prioress, “ those idle misgivings which it is the business of interested relations to inspire, that we being denied all that makes life of value, the more may remain open to them. He who destined you to a convent, has not,

I believe, designed to become monk or hermit himself.”

“ I know not that he has, madam ; but I know that his affection for me was most sincere. It was his love that placed me here.”

“ So he pretended.”

“ So I know, for so he told me ; and he would never stoop to falsehood.”

“ It may be that you are deceived. But I think you have not scrupled to acknowledge that you had a lover ?”

“ There was one, who, not less anxious for my welfare than my uncle, looked on me with even more of tenderness, and would fain have been my protector through life. I —”

“ Would fain have seen him gratified in this.”

“ To have known him blest would have been the dearest joy on earth my heart could taste ; but I will confess, if one selfish thought was ever known to

me, it was the wish that his society might be the solace of my future years."

"And would nought suffice but his?"

"Madam?"

"Was he the only man whose society could cheer your heart?"

"The presence of my uncle I have ever coveted."

"But I speak of a lover. Have you seen but one in that character whose converse might cheer you?"

"But one, madam; nor would I see another."

"Child, you know not yourself. You love him of whom you have spoken, because on him your attention was first particularly fixed. But nature has happily fashioned woman's heart on a less exclusive plan than the giddy girl enamoured of her first admirer can suppose. This you shall shortly prove.

"I understand not —"

"I know that explanation must be needful, and will supply it. You fairly

confessed yourself sad at heart, when brought here to pass a life, which may be long, in kneeling before crosses, counting beads, and performing the other conventual exercises. Others have felt the same grief before you, and, devising measures for their own relief, have done what may relieve you from the irksome dulness in which you anticipated your days would pass.”

“ I comprehend not, holy madam, to what your speech refers. From the exercises of a convent I never shrunk, but because to reside where these are used I must have to deplore the loss of the friends to whom I had become attached.”

“ But, my fair sister, other attachments may be formed. And here, even here, where churlish relations would doom the vestal to rigid observances, and joyless solitude, those may gain admittance who will snatch the devoted from lonely wretchedness.”

Mariana was confused : she doubted her own capacity, and looked anxiously on the prioress, as expecting some elucidation."

"The news which I communicate," said the prioress, "seems to overwhelm you ; but question not its truth : you may yet see a lover at your feet."

"Alas, madam ! —"

"Nay, spare the childish declaration you contemplate : you would tell me that one, that one alone, could be welcome ; but reflect — before he was seen you dreamed not of his existence, and another, not less accomplished may yet be found, reluctant as you are to deem this possible."

"Madam, I would fain hope that I misunderstand you."

"Why this foolish bashfulness ? Have you not avowed your hatred of the life of a nun ? After this, can you affect disgust when I announce to you, that,

though withdrawn from the world, its pleasures may follow you to a convent?"

"Need I repeat, that the woe which I experience in mournful separation from those who were dear to me cannot be removed by scenes like those you intimate may here be witnessed."

"Have you not confessed that you wished to remain the entire mistress of your actions ; that you felt and thought with me, that pleasure was not sin."

"I did think that the world might be seen and enjoyed without that risk of awful punishment which my uncle taught was ever to be expected, but I did not therefore suppose that —"

"How !" cried the prioress, hastily interrupting, while her eyes glistened with more than ordinary brightness, "have you invited confidence, to betray it? Are you thus artful?"

"I have employed no art."

"Have you not listened to my speech with seeming joy? Did not your every

look proclaim that you were shocked at a convent's gloom ; terrified at the bare thought of its expected rigour ? Yet now, when kindness would remove your dread, you answer with cold caution, and disdainful glances."

" I have till this hour listened to you, madam, with unfeigned satisfaction, because your voice never failed to breathe comfort and to utter words of kindness : I have trembled to lead the life of a nun, because I feared my heart would be slow to yield the wished-for zeal in the discharge of its duties. For this, and for other causes, not now to be explained, I have been depressed, and thought my lot hard ; but I shrink with tenfold horror from the degrading and impious consolation of which you would seem the advocate."

" Degrading ! Impious ! Are these the terms applied to language of mine ?"

" These are the terms, madam, which I must apply to depravity like that which

would profane an institution dedicated to religion.”

Mariana spoke with firmness, and the prioress, to whom her speech was addressed, stood amazed at the energy which she witnessed, and at her own misconception of the character of the sister who feared not thus resolutely to condemn what had been suggested ; but wrath soon triumphed so far over astonishment, as to give utterance to the indignant feelings which unexpected reproof had called forth.

“ Thou declaimest well,” she said ; “ but mark me, it is not well that thou shouldest thus declaim. Thou hast perfidiously drawn me on to unbosom myself, and now thou knowest me as I am. The veil has been withdrawn, and cannot be resumed : take the consequences.”

“ What mean you, madam ?”

“ My meaning shall not long be questionable. In me you see no timid cal-

culating wretch, but the determined votary of pleasure. Call me sinner if you will, I am woman. Torn from delicious life, in ripening youth, it was here that an unfeeling parent destined me to sigh. Devotion invited me to heaven, but passion chained me to earth ; and still my soul clings to the happiness which it has not feared to know.

“ I am shocked beyond expression ! You, madam, must shape your conduct as you will ; but for me, I cannot, nay, much as my peremptory tone may offend, I *will* not be the partner of your course.

“ Indeed ! This is resolutely said ; but unless you have power to force these walls you *shall*.”

“ O, madam ! — in mercy forbear ! ”

“ It is too late : you know too much of my history to be left in a state to tell your own without a blush. The king has already dissolved many religious houses, and none can tell which next will share the same fate. Should he so

deal with the convent of St. Helen, never think that it shall be yours serenely to recount what you know to my prejudice. Whatever ill may befall me, at least your spotless insolence shall not survive to taunt my shame."

With these words the abbess hastily re-entered the chapel, while Mariana, confounded and dismayed, remained leaning against the shaft of one of the pillars which supported the pointed arches of the cloister. She trembled to recall the scene which had just closed ; but with respect to that which was yet to open, and to which the threat of the prioress referred, a wide field was left for dismal conjecture. Death by violence seemed the least of the evils which she had to dread.

CHAP. X.

The gentleman is learn'd, and a most rare speaker,
To nature none more bound; his training such,
That he may furnish and instruct great teachers,
And never seek for aid out of himself.

SHAKSPEARE.

THOUGH Lord Erpingham was anxious to employ what remained of his life in the service of his country, he was not ambitious of the honours of office; and the invitation which he had received, and which he regarded as a summons to appear before the king, while it moved his curiosity, neither excited his hopes nor flattered his vanity.

In truth, when the hour drew near, he would gladly have declined going. Though no monarch that ever filled the British throne could be more popular than Henry was, at different periods of

his reign, many of his acts were so odious and tyrannical, that it was impossible for good men to approve of them. As the Reform advanced, those who favoured it lauded him to the skies, for setting the Pope at defiance, and for putting down monastic establishments, in some of which great disorders unquestionably prevailed ; and the exaggerated reports which gained currency with the multitude on this subject, induced a belief that all were disgraced by crimes the most foul.

But while tearing the veil from sanctified impostors, and punishing ascertained crime, Henry was not sufficiently careful to guard against oppressing the pious adherents of that ecclesiastical power which it had once been his glory to defend. Zeal seldom accomplishes the reform which necessity demands, without going further : thus it was at the period to which our narrative has now arrived ; and not content with exposing the deceptions by which divers inter-

ested persons had been in the habit of imposing on the credulous, the most virtuous characters in the land, if they rigidly adhered to the faith in which they had been educated, were, in many instances, pursued with deadly hostility as factious partisans of the Bishop of Rome, as it had now become fashionable to call the Pope.

Lord Erpingham shared the sentiments of Sir Thomas More ; and doing so, after the catastrophe which prematurely deprived the world of that great man, he could not view the acts of the King in the most favourable light. But his loyalty remained firm ; and anxious to feel that regard for the sovereign which others never ceased to express, he endeavoured to persuade himself that actions not in accordance with the goodness of heart for which he had formerly given his royal master credit, were in truth not his own, but those of evil counsellors.

It was to one of the serjeants' feasts, at Ely House, that Lord Erpingham was bidden. The hour of supper, for it was a supper which was expected to be graced with the royal presence, was six in the afternoon.

He had mounted his horse, and, attended by one domestic, was in the act of leaving Fickett's fields, when a stranger called to him, —

“Tarry awhile, my Lord Erpingham, for I would have conference with you.”

The peer looked with some surprise at the man who had thus accosted him. His wretched habiliments were singularly at variance with the authoritative tone in which he had spoken, and the dignified deportment which he laboured to assume.

“Tarry, my Lord,” he again called out ; “for I am commissioned to negotiate with you on divers matters of importance.”

The lofty speech and vulgar carriage of the man presented a most ludicrous com-

bination; and Lord Erpingham, though little accustomed to jest, could not refrain from answering him lightly.

“ I judge, knave,” he said, “ the negotiation which you desire to enter upon, must have some relation to the butlery ; wherefore, seeing I have no time to examine credentials, and settle bases with you, even pass thither at once, and you shall be fed.”

“ That which you have commissioned me to do, I shall punctually execute.”

“ I have confidence in thy promise,” said Lord Erpingham ; and would have moved forward, when the voice of the tattered ambassador detained him a moment longer, as he now called to him.

“ But more shall I require than food : it is therefore I would have thee dismount straight, and think me not the humble common sort of man I appear, if adjudged by the aspect of my garments.”

“ If you are not sporting,” said Lord Erpingham, “ tell me, and in one word — what you are.”

“ An earl.”

The surprise which this speech occasioned was turned to a new object ; and Lord Erpingham, with some sternness, demanded of his servant, who had suddenly indulged in a fit of ungovernable laughter, what had so powerfully moved him.

“ O ! the varlet tells truth,” the man replied : “ he is what he names himself, he is the earl —” Here he was unable to speak, from the effect produced on his risible muscles, till the peer relieved him from the inconvenient impediment to utterance by the angry and commanding voice of reproof.

“ Cease fooling. Who is this man ? What is he called ?”

“ So please your Lordship’s honour, I saw him lately, when I was in —”

“ What is he called ?”

“ *The Earl of Poverty.*”

This title had not become so generally known then as it was shortly afterwards. Lord Erpingham, displeased at being thus trifled with, deigned to make no reply; and spurring his horse forward, he passed through Jackanapes-lane, and towards Holborn, without paying the slightest regard to the repeated calls of the Earl of Poverty.

Though day had not yet closed, Lord Erpingham, as a mark of respect, was received at Ely House by ten domestics bearing lighted torches.

The curious crowd in front of the building was too great to be penetrated without difficulty, and several from among the multitude passed into the court-yard with him. These, all but one, were presently expelled; but the last that remained called to Lord Erpingham, and prayed that he would speak in his behalf, as he, besides having been long employed by Lord Erpingham as a

tradesman, claimed indulgence, seeing the occasion which had brought the peer there was one of no ordinary interest to the speaker.

Lord Erpingham recognised in the person by whom he was thus solicited a respectable goldsmith.

“ I know you are,” said he, “ what you represent yourself to be ; but what so peculiarly interests you in the coming pageant ? ”

“ Let it please your Lordship to know, I am the maker of the coat which the King’s majesty designs to wear at the banquet.”

“ How ! ” exclaimed his Lordship ; “ have you quitted your former calling to become a cutter out of cloths ? ”

“ Not so ; but your Lordship shall be informed, that the coat which the King hath by this put on, is only prepared in its most incomplete state by the tailor. To work—in the gold and the jewels which must adorn it is the business of

the goldsmith ; and I am most solicitous to observe how this, my most laboured effort, shall appear by torchlight."

" I have so little to do with courtly splendour, that I had forgotten that it was no unusual thing for a goldsmith to assist in making a garment."

His Lordship spoke in behalf of the citizen, who was suffered to remain. The peer was entering the palace, when a loud cry of " New torches " was heard from a hundred voices : this announced the King's near approach ; and a discharge of cannon, placed in the courtyard for that purpose, now made it known that his majesty had actually arrived.

Though the former torches had not been long kindled, they were promptly thrown aside, and twenty new ones lighted, this being regarded as a point of *etiquette*, in honour of the royal visitor, which must in no case be omitted. He was received by the learned persons,

whose advancement was the cause of the series of festivals then in course of being given, with acknowledgments for his royal condescension. His reply was marked by the dignity of a monarch, and the apparent frankness and cordiality of an equal. A description of Henry would here be superfluous, as perhaps no distinguished personage of former days has had the fortune to have correct and concurring representations of his face and figure made so familiar with all classes in the several ages which have elapsed since the time in which he lived ; this, however may be remarked, that when disposed to be gracious, nothing could be more happily blended, than the elegance of the courtier, and the blunt, or as some would call it, the John Bull-like good humour, which he was wont to display.

His dress was most splendid ; and the coat which the goldsmith had been so anxious to see on his royal customer

reflected no discredit on his art. It was of crimson velvet, fitting somewhat loosely. The sleeves were slashed, the open parts being lined with cloth of gold. The breast was also slashed, decorated with flowers of flatted gold of damask, buttons and loops of the same, and studded with rubies and pearls, which were bestowed in such profusion, that but little of the velvet remained uncovered. The *bases*, or skirts, were lined with white satin; and the border of this costly garment presented a superb specimen of embroidery.

In the midst of the bustle which prevailed while the King was being ushered into the grand hall, Lord Erpingham was not overlooked. Henry was pleased to compliment him, by reproof for absenting himself from court, where, in order that he might continue to reign as might become a British king, in triumph and glory, he said he evermore desired to see the wisest men of his realm, among whom he accounted Lord Erpingham to be one.

Henry thus condescended, while a *mum-mery* was in progress, in which his own resemblance paraded the room, honoured as the greatest of the nine worthies, among whom were Alfred, Alexander the Great, and King Solomon.

The hall was a venerable and spacious apartment : it was more than seventy feet in length. The six Gothic trefoil windows which lighted it by day were now concealed from view by cloth of gold, on which the white and red roses of the once hostile, but at length united, houses of York and Lancaster were tastefully disposed. Chairs, with padded backs, covered with ancient tapestry, were placed on each side of the upper end of the table, and forms continued the line to the extremity of the hall. At the head of the table a chair, elegantly hung with purple velvet, was placed for the King, surmounted by a royal canopy or cloth of estate ; behind this the authors of the feast took their station in dutiful

attendance, till his Majesty, affably dispensing with their services, commanded all present to be seated.

The Warner “by for the first course” was then introduced. This was a magnificent castle in paste. Its towers were crowned with flowers, and warriors and saints were mingled for its protection. Here again Henry found his own likeness: the King, represented in his robes of state, and acting under the immediate influence of the *Holy Ghost*, which in the form of a dove hovered near him, seemed to make hopeless all attempts on a fortress so defended. It were vain to enlarge on the “*Sheldes of brawne in armor*,” “*Frumetye with venison*,” “*Capons of high goe*,” “*Pik in Latymer sawce*,” “*Kid reversed*,” “*Perche in jelaye*,” “*Peacock in hakell*,” “*Red shankes*,” “*Larks ingrailed*,” and the numerous other obsolete delicacies under which the festive board groaned, while the trumpets sounded, and the

numerous company regaled in dazzling profusion.

Lord Erpingham gazed with interest on the hilarity around him, and derived pleasure from witnessing joy which he did not share. He recalled that period of his life, when in such a scene he could have laughed with the gayest, and pondered with sadness on the coming days, in which those whom he then saw living but to renew convivial delights should be depressed like himself, and only consoled by the prospect of that removal, which as yet they could ill endure to contemplate. Then he gazed on the cloudless brow of Henry, and much he marvelled that one, who, if he had not committed the crimes with which Lord Erpingham could not help mentally charging the monarch, had sanctioned measures which no sense of duty could make other than painful to a humane mind, should be so calm and cheerful. But melancholy

seemed not to approach Henry: the bold flush of joy was on his cheek; laughter glistened in his eye; and if the indications of a heart at ease could be received as proof of a conscience free from reproach, no saint could be more blameless than the King of England.

“ Right glad am I,” said the monarch, “ to find myself once more in such goodly company; and never trust me, but you my Lord Erpingham, are of those I most desired to greet. But methinks, though the remark be unseemly, your hue is somewhat faded.”

“ Time, your Highness knows, will not spare even kings; who then shall marvel, that one so humble as I am should make show of sickness, and of the ghastly aspect of age.”

“ Nay, my Lord, you overrun the mark: I hope yet to profit largely by your wisdom, ere Age has called you his. But living in retirement, and inhabiting a salubrious spot, questionless selected by

the learned brethren of those civilians who now surround us from its so blithely combining the advantages of town and country, I looked to see you in more robust health."

"Your Grace is most condescending: I complain of no serious malady."

"I learned, for often have I asked news of Lord Erpingham, that you had quite recovered from the arrow-wound you received two years past, through the carelessness of the students while shooting in Fickett's fields."

To this circumstance it is probable the King adverted for the purpose of introducing some remark on the measures which had been adopted to repress an evil, once very prevalent in the neighbourhood of Holborn. Young men, and especially law-students, had been much accustomed to exercise themselves in archery, near the several inns, by shooting rabbits, which abounded in the adjacent meadows. This, as the business

and population of the metropolis increased, became a formidable nuisance, which it had become absolutely necessary to put down by act of parliament.

“ I trust,” said Henry, “ the law has been duly enforced; for well advised am I, even by learned serjeants near me, that not few of those who studied law were likely to gain more proficiency in archery than knowledge as lawyers, if violation of the statute were winked at. But it is reported, that being in this restrained, they now, and some grave lawyers are named as with them, indulge in games, such as coiting, cloysh, cayls, and carding, as also *shove* and *slip-groat*, which have been prohibited by law, to all of their most comely and honourable profession.”

Lord Erpingham declared his ignorance of the fact. The King fixed his eye on a learned serjeant to the right of the peer, as expecting confirmation or denial.

“ Youthful blood, my liege,” replied the lawyer, “will fall into some excesses; but I feel assured, that none of mature years, or of weight, as persons learned in the law, are now seen disporting in such fashion.”

The King replied, “Wishing to give license for all seemly enjoyments, we cannot choose but feel it would never be merry in England if such disorders eluded reprehension.”

“All must own your Majesty well founded in this,” remarked Lord Erpingham. “To youth I would concede all modest and invigorating recreations; but graceless trifling demands strong interference. Such do I think would be meet for him who hanged the *cat on the cross* in Cheapside, with his *head shaven*, and rags sewed on him, in mockery of the habiliments of priesthood, and with a wafer tied between his paws.”

“That, my good Lord, was described to me as a right merry conceit, devised

to mock the flouting, glozing bishop of Rome, whose pretended zeal in the cause of Heaven seeks to enslave all the potentates of earth."

"Your Majesty knows right well that I am not of mirthful mood; and I must acknowledge, that in torturing a wretched animal, and in picturing with derision the attire of one devoted to the service of the Most High, I saw — I speak under correction — but unseemly merriment and sinful profanation."

Lord Erpingham spoke with energy. He suspected that he had expressed himself with too much warmth; but he afterwards thought the King inclined to favour the opinion which he had advanced, as Henry made no reply, and in the course of the evening frequently noticed him with much affability.

The festivity of the night concluded, and the King having withdrawn with all his suite, Lord Erpingham went home. He was somewhat surprised to find the

Earl of Poverty there. This man had waited for his return, and now accosted him as before, in a tone which ill assorted with his mean appearance and illiterate speech. Matters of great moment he said were appointed to be arranged by him, and he produced a letter. Lord Erpingham received it, read the superscription, and looked at the seal, but declined cutting the silk which bound the paper. The Earl of Poverty offered to do it for him, when a gentleman, whom Lord Erpingham had noticed in close attendance on the King, most unexpectedly entered. He accounted for his arrival at so unseasonable an hour, (it being then after ten o'clock,) by stating himself to be charged with a confidential message from the king. At these words the Earl of Poverty thought fit to make good his retreat, taking with him the letter. Blount (the royal messenger) looked earnestly on him as he retired. He was then conducted into a private

apartment, where he informed Lord Erpingham that what had fallen from him at the banquet, touching the mockery of the Pope, and those who adhered to him, had made such deep impression on the King, that he wished to hear more of his opinions on the like subjects, considering these might serve to correct errors into which he had possibly fallen. Blount then asked several questions touching the opinions of Lord Erpingham in matters connected with the authority of the Pope. The peer reminded his visitor that a recent act of parliament made the expression of any opinion tending to deny the King's supremacy fraught with great danger. He was answered, that the monarch engaged on his honour to protect him from all evil consequences, as he sincerely desired to profit by his advice. Thus assured, Lord Erpingham scrupled not frankly to express his dissent from some of the measures of the King, and especially to

deprecate the manner in which he considered the just influence of the Pope to have been set aside. Blount manifested much satisfaction at hearing his sentiments, and soon departed.

CHAP. XI.

Shot forth a glimpse of fitful light
To quench the gleam of gloomier night.

GRATTAN.

THE cares of Edmund for his wretched fellow-prisoner were vain. If his heart relented in favour of William, it was the only one that did so. But had the kindest attentions that skill and pity could combine, under circumstances the most favourable, been lavished on him, their united power would have proved unavailing. Rage, remorse, shame, and sickness concurred to close his days; and he died unwatched, unpitied, but by him from whom he had merited no such attention.

It was just as the great bell of the monastery sounded the second hour

after midnight that the monk expired. Edmund held the dim lamp over his face, and perceived that life was fled. He closed the dead man's eyes ; and while he looked on the pale face and inanimate form of the deceased, strong conviction came over him, that a similar fate awaited himself, and that a very few days would dismiss his spirit from its earthly habitation.

The body of William was removed the next morning. To find that a life was extinguished appeared to excite neither surprise nor regret, among those by whom the punishment was inflicted. No speech was addressed to Edmund on the occasion ; but the sullen steadfastness with which they gazed on the remaining prisoner indicated sorrow that their watchings over him were not immediately to terminate, as they had done in the case of the deceased.

The day after that on which the remains of De Broke had been carried

forth for interment, the usual visit was paid to the cell. The monk, who had performed this duty since the attempt at escape which had proved so unfortunate for William, appeared with a small supply of food.

“ May I ask one question ? ” said Edmund, “ may I ask if my death is — ”

The monk waved his hand to enjoin silence, — at the same time opening his cowl, the prisoner recognised the features of Nicholas Bray.

Edmund, surprised, was about to speak, but Bray again motioned for him to abstain from speech, and pointed to the passage from which he had entered, to intimate that there was danger of being overheard. He looked out from the door, and then returned.

“ Peace,” said he : “ I am waited for : I left one, who expects me, by the steps, and I perceive he remains there : he cannot now hear, but he may advance, and that will preclude me from speaking.

“ I was about to ask —”

“ If your death is decided upon?” said the jester, anticipating. “ It is : should damp and darkness fail to close your eyes, in a very short time other means will be used.”

“ And know you —”

“ This only I know, that the grave which will this night receive the corpse of William is to be kept open for you.”

“ It is enough.”

“ Enough !” cried Bray : “ marry, it would be enough for any man, but it will be too much for you. My tongue is beginning to amble in its old strain. I must away. Was that the sound of a footstep ?”

“ I heard none.”

“ Father Egbert has proposed to admit Lord Erpingham to-morrow to see the dying Edmund. You are to be induced to swallow a stupefying draught, to the end that you may be looked on without being able to complain of your treatment.”

“ But by what means will they compel me to swallow it ? I thank you for this information. They may tear me limb from limb, but I will drink nothing.”

“ I have some hope that you will not be pressed. My alacrity in helping to secure you, when you were already in safe custody, has gained me great favour with Egbert ; and it may be my office to administer the sleeping draught.—Hush !”

Both listened, to ascertain whether any one drew near. All was silent.

“ Of this be assured, that, at the risk of being treated like William, I will attempt something for your preservation. Guard yourself against surprise and sudden exclamation, whatever may chance.”

The monk, who had remained without, was heard calling to Bray, who hastily withdrew.

Weaned as the prisoner had been from life by untoward circumstances, he had not so completely estranged himself from the ordinary feelings of men, as

to contemplate without emotion the act of assassination which he understood was to be committed on his person. But the indignation inspired by the villainy of the perfidious ecclesiastic, impatience to expose, and, above all, anxiety to find the means of arresting him before he proceeded further in crime, made him desire with tenfold eagerness that the hope which the jester held out to him might not prove delusive. He was disposed to confide in him ; but what he had said of his being in favour with Egbert appeared open to suspicion. Bray might have hit upon this scheme for gaining the favour and confidence of the abbot. It was easy to defeat the attempts at escape which he himself suggested, and double treachery would gain the reward of extraordinary fidelity. Yet there was a frankness about Nicholas, which Edmund, much as he had suffered from confiding in appearances, could not believe to be assumed. It was true, that none could

be more forward than he had been to seize Edmund when he was detected in the corridor. He seemed elated with the opportunity of so distinguishing himself, and whether that was real, or proceeded from the kindly feelings which he now expressed, it was not easy to determine. Edmund, however, inclined to the latter supposition, and only allowed himself to suspect the ability of the jester, which he feared would prove unequal to the design he had avowed.

Of the desperate villainy of Egbert he was so far convinced that he doubted not he was capable of proceeding to the bloodiest lengths, to remove for ever one whose existence was to him a source of alarm. To foil him, it was necessary to reject the intoxicating draught which he expected would be offered. If he could save himself from this, whatever the consequences to himself, there might be some hope that Egbert would not escape suspicion. The dagger might be used to

dispatch him, but his mangled form, produced to Lord Erpingham, would tell by what means he came to his end ; and to bring the murderer to justice, and doing so, to save Mariana, if she had not already perished, were objects which he considered would be gained on moderate terms, if his life might suffice to pay their price.

He was fixed to resist at all events ; but an apprehension came over him, that Egbert would, in the first instance, take measures to disable him from offering effectual opposition. Edmund feared this was practicable ; and, maddening at the thought, looked in vain round his narrow cell for some weapon that might defend him from his enemies, and at least cheer him in death with a gleam of vengeful joy.

But if the jester should succeed in bringing him the draught ! In that case the struggle he contemplated would not occur. But what course would it be wise

for him to take? Would it be well to put it out of the power of Egbert to let him be seen? or would it most confound him, if by counterfeiting the lethargic insensibility into which it was proposed to throw him, till aware of the presence of Lord Erpingham, he could then start from his couch, and denounce his oppressor? The latter course was that which he preferred; and, resolved on this point, he anxiously awaited the arrival of the hour which was to decide whether or not it would be in his power to give effect to his determination.

Night had come on, and from hour to hour Edmund expected the messenger or messengers of his fate. At length he heard a sound, and dismay came over him, for he could perceive that it was neither one nor two that approached, but a number more than sufficient to overpower the fiercest struggles of one man. He feared that they would prevent him from dying, or from sustaining such

injury as would announce to his friends the crime by which he perished ; and in the despair of the moment he looked on the massy walls which enclosed him, and exclaimed, —

“ I have heard of the victims of tyranny dashing out their brains against the stones which formed their prison to escape a more cruel punishment. Am I, who have so much reason to covet such an end, too irresolute to seek it as they have done ? As yet, I have the opportunity. A few instants, and it will be withdrawn, and my atrocious enemy must triumph, and continue to flourish in unsuspected guilt. — Why do I pause ? ”

Hesitation was at an end ; but in that moment his eye rested on a tall crucifix, black as the walls enclosing it, which was fixed, elevated by one step above the floor, at the extremity of the cell. Edmund deemed it no sacrilege to convert this into a weapon of defence.

The corroded nails which held it together soon gave way to his strength, and arming himself with the transverse piece of timber, he awaited the coming of the monks. But the sounds became fainter. He was satisfied that the monks were retiring; and it suddenly struck him, that they were probably engaged in performing the obsequies of William. In this he was confirmed, when, after so much time had elapsed as might suffice to deposit the coffin in the ground with such brief ceremony as they were likely to bestow, he heard the parties again at the same distance as before, and perceived that they were ascending.

All was again profoundly still. An hour had passed since Edmund heard the monks, and as yet there was no appearance of any intention to carry into effect the resolution which the jester had announced to have been taken. Musing on the strange situation in which he found himself, a drowsiness, which he

could scarcely strive against, attacked him : he rose to shake it off, while he mentally enquired if it were possible that he could already have received the opiate. He suspiciously examined the bread and water, which remained of that which had been given for his sustenance, but nothing was discernible that could warrant belief that these had been adulterated. He felt more than ever disposed to sleep. His eyes closed, but he was quickly roused by hearing the lock of the dungeon turned : the door opened, and Nicholas Bray appeared.

“ I have unwelcome tidings to bring,” said he. “ Egbert will suffer the potion to be administered by no hand but his own.”

“ And will he come alone ?”

“ Will he go to the devil alone ! Not he, if he can help it : — no, he will take care to be well attended ; for now that William is dead, he inclines to the

belief, that you offered violence to him, when you broke from his custody, and will therefore be prepared to bind you hand and foot, if needful."

"Then there is no hope?"

"There, you are wrong. True it is, if they come and find you here, there will be no help for you. But I trust that when they arrive you will be missing."

"How!"

"Beshrew me, if I have time to tell you *how*, unless I give up the chance of showing you."

"I say no more:—let us forth at once, without speech: good fool."

"Your pardon, I am no good fool; and we will not forth at once. You must yet again hear the door closed on you, for at present they look for me above."

"Before you can return, Egbert and his associates may be here."

"Not for past two hours yet. They

are afraid that the effects of the drugs, if Lord Erpingham should not come early, may cease too soon, and therefore they will not visit you before day-break. Here is a dry and decent looking dress for you ; wear this, and be ready to move when I return.”

“ Stay —”

“ I may not tarry now, or you will chance to tarry to-morrow, which were better done without.”

“ But tell me, can you give me a sword, or any weapon ?”

“ By holy St. Egbert, and that’s our abbot, and he is the devil, I can give nothing of the sort. But I see you have managed to provide yourself with the means of making a tolerably forcible appeal to the understanding of any man who has not been blessed with a wooden skull. Pray act deliberately, for I should not like you in a hurry to deal a blow at me, as I have not sufficient confidence in

the thickness of my head to think lightly of such a present."

"I wish but to sell my life dearly."

"You had better not sell it at all; for you won't find a very good market, seeing it is of small use to any one but the present owner. Keep it by you, as a trinket for the amusement of your friends, till it gets too old for sale, even if any body wanted to buy such a thing second-hand."

With these words he closed the door; and Edmund heard him retreating with such careless haste, that again the idea occurred to him that he might be acting a treacherous part, and had nothing to fear from detection.

A considerable time elapsed, and the jester returned not. Edmund was convinced that he could not do what he had promised, if it had ever been his intention to attempt it. Satisfied of this, his former thoughts returned, when the silence which had prevailed was again broken. Some one, he was sure, drew

near with slow and cautious steps. He listened, and thought he distinguished those of more than one person. The jester, he was convinced, had failed of success, or had betrayed him.

CHAP. XII.

Antiquity deserveth that reverence that men should make a stay awhile, and stand thereupon, and look about.

LORD BACON.

A FEW moments proved him to be mistaken, and the jester appeared alone. He sustained in his arms a load of such magnitude that it surpassed his own stature. Having laid it on the ground, he withdrew without speaking.

This conduct was inexplicable. What Bray had deposited in the cell had somewhat the appearance of a human figure. Edmund approached it, and withdrew the coarse cloth in which it had been wrapped, when, with equal amazement and disgust, he beheld the ghastly countenance of William de Broke. Why the corpse of the wretched monk should have been brought there it was impos-

sible to conjecture, as he could not conceive in what way this would operate for or against the intended escape.

But his embarrassment was not of long duration. Bray returned, and proceeded to explain.

“ I could not speak when I brought your old companion back, for I thought a sudden movement had taken place in the refectory, from the sounds which I heard, and hastened to satisfy myself that Egbert was not yet enquiring for me.”

“ But for what purpose have you brought the corpse ?”

“ William comes here to be once more your substitute.”

“ What mean you ?”

“ De Broke in size and figure was your exact counterpart. His complexion and yours were widely different; but his paleness will be yours when you die, and therefore I am not without hope that his countenance may pass for yours while you live.”

“Impossible ! The shape of the face, generally, may bear some resemblance to mine, but in several respects the difference is so great that no such imposture as you contemplate can be practised with chance of success.”

“I marvel little that you should be slow to believe that this singularly ugly villain can in any case be thought to resemble you. But this shall be.”

“Look at the eyebrows ; look at the beard ; look at the hair on the crown of the head. Can colours be more opposed than these and the hue of my hair ?”

“Why, I do not deny that there are some shades of difference ; but in these times, when so many are ready to swear that black is white, I nothing despair, of furnishing those who may be that way inclined with some *colour* for committing perjury.”

“You cannot be serious ?”

“Not very easily I confess, save and except when I am hungry. But let

me tell you, Master Edmund, that I have said nought but what I mean to make good for all that. Nick Bray would not have kept his footing as a fool so long as he did, had he not well studied disguises. This fellow's silver hair shall presently be as black as yours."

While speaking, he produced a liquid which quickly changed the hue of the dead man's locks. He continued to apply the composition where it was required, and soon completed his task, to the astonishment of Edmund, who had previously no conception of the prodigious change that might thus be effected.

"Now bestow your eyes on my work," cried Bray with exultation. "You cannot say I make the devil fair ; but, certainly, I have stripped one of his votaries of much of his diabolical aspect, in making William de Broke look so unlike himself."

“ I confess surprise,” said Edmund, “ at the change, but still there are points in which he is much unlike me.”

“ And what of that ? Death makes a great change in every one, and people sometimes give him credit for making greater changes than even he can effect ; and this will account for any slight want of resemblance.

“ I cannot think the cheat will escape detection.”

“ Till to-morrow it will. Dressed in your discarded garb, those who come here an hour hence will not care to examine the dead man very closely. Black eye-brows will never put them in mind of William ; and besides, from the shrinking and fearful glances which I saw them throw on him, I am quite certain that few of them care to look on a corpse at all. Believing you dead, they will never think of taking measures that can interfere with our design. I remain behind, and shall probably be most about

the dead man, and must therefore have some opportunity of favouring the deception.

“ Should you be discovered ! ”

“ In that case I must succeed you and William in the enjoyment of this tranquil retreat ; but you, being at liberty, will be able to spoil the worthy Egbert’s sport, and soon recall me to the light of day.

Bray was not idle while this conversation passed. The dead monk was attired in the discarded habiliments of Edmund, and placed on the mattress in a posture which seemed one to which the deceased had sunk from pain and exhaustion. Edmund could not but admire the dexterity of the jester, and still doubting whether the corpse could be taken for his, he thought it next to impossible for it at once to be recognised as that of William.

Bray now led the way. He carefully locked the door, when they had gained the passage ; and, bearing the

cloth in which he had lately wrapped the remains of William, he proceeded to the vault where they had lately reposed, and in which Edmund had formerly been secured. Edmund gazed with sensations not easily to be described on the pillar from which his shadow had been thrown on the wall before the astonished Egbert, and he almost expected to see some other concealed watcher.

“I know the way better than I did,” said Bray, in an elated and confident tone.

“It were better that you should not speak so loud,” said Edmund.

“We run little risk of being encountered or overheard,” the jester replied: “the brethren above have been too much occupied in bestowing William, and arranging the manner in which you should be disposed of to-night, to be likely to walk this way yet. — Be careful how you advance. Take care of that pit. — That is the grave of William.”

“ I see it, and shall not fall into it.”

“ I hope not. But you were in some danger of doing so a short time ago.”

They left the vault by the door from which Egbert had formerly entered. Thence they advanced by a rugged passage, narrow and of considerable extent.

“ Are we nearly at the place by which we can leave this scene of crime ?” Edmund enquired.

“ I think we are,” the jester answered ; “ and we must be careful not to stray beyond it ; for if we go too far, instead of getting to the place I desire to reach, we shall find ourselves in the neighbouring nunnery.”

“ That of St. Helen ?”

“ Aye, marry, shall we. Now if we get there, I know not what reception we shall have. I, being somewhat stricken in years, might come off sorrily ; while you, if not suspected of rebellion against their holy confessor, would be kindly received.

But as this is a matter of some uncertainty, we shall do well to stop short of the convent.

Edmund shuddered at being reminded of the depravity which prevailed within those walls which enclosed Mariana ; but the present was no time to express what he felt. He replied but by asking, —

“ And whither do you propose that we shall make our way ? ”

“ There are two houses which you may have heretofore remarked, which interpose between the convent of St. Helen and the street in which the granary stands, over against the heavy house of old Sir Hugh Nevill.”

“ I remember that house.”

“ Little did poor Sir Hugh think when he was building it, two or three hundred years ago, that his mansion, the *Leadenhall*, would give the street in which it stood its own nickname, which it now begins to do. One of the houses I men-

tioned is used by our holy fraternity to to give forth *doles* and *alms* at certain seasons."

"I know it well ; but if we get there, must not instant detection ensue ?"

"Know you not that the vault of which I speak is inhabited by a decayed pepperer, who depends upon Egbert and his fellows for his bread ?"

"Therefore, so it seems to me, our danger must be great, for he will deem it right incontinently to detain us, and apprise Egbert forthwith of our doings."

"There is no risk of that, for the pepperer is too much accustomed to the disorderly proceedings of the inhabitants of the monastery, to think it strange that one of the order should forth at night. And, mark you, hard by the rear of that house stands another, from which you can pass to the cloisters of the convent. Now, when you find yourself in the first house, have a care that you stir not towards the second, for that may lead you into much peril, seeing, if it be closed, it shall

be asked of you whence you come, and contrariwise, being opened you shall be sent towards the convent, which you seek not at this moment."

"How then shall I act?"

"Even as though you would retrace the steps you have now taken, and so you shall reach the street with ease, for the old pepperer will nothing doubt but you are from the convent, and give you free egress to the street without question or suspicion."

"Should it chance otherwise?"

"Throttle him on the spot, that he may not detain me when I find it needful to follow."

"And why will not you go with me?"

"Let the reasons which I gave you before suffice. But here our speech must end. Pass up this ladder, push up the trap, and you are in the house; and whether the old man be waking or not, make direct for the street. Being there, I strongly advise that you use the pre-

cautions which I formerly devised, and approach not Lord Erpingham before the dark hour. Take heed of this letter to my friend Mr. Common Hunt ; for Dick Longthong will harbour no ecclesiastic who brings not his credentials in good set form. He will send a messenger whither you will ; and Egbert, however soon he may discover the cheat, will not think of seeking you in that direction."

Edmund ascended the ladder, and found himself in the house which had been described to him. He saw nothing of its inhabitant, and was careful to make no noise which might disturb him. But bewildered by the various ideas which occupied his mind, as well as by the gloomy intricacies which he had just traversed, he forgot which way he had been directed to turn. In this uncertainty he lifted up the trap again, to speak to Bray, but the jester had retreated, and all was darkness. Compelled to trust to chance, his good fortune conducted him to the

door he sought. It was daylight, and already the streets had begun to be peopled by the industrious classes. He walked with as much expedition as he could use, without attracting particular notice, towards Shoreditch. Turning quickly to the left, through Bethlem gate, he passed the old hospital, frequently looking round to ascertain whether or not he was pursued, and soon found himself away from the houses, and in perfect solitude.

The sun had just risen, when he gained the immense fields then lying close to the city. He stood on the margin of the gentle stream, which passed across them, and through the great wall, from which circumstance it received the name of *Wall-Brook*. The wall itself, from the vast extent of it which here met the eye, was no contemptible object; while the lofty churches, monasteries, and other public edifices of the city which it enclosed, and seemed

to defend, challenged admiration singly, but presented a spectacle of more than ordinary grandeur, given to the view in picturesque unity. In the fore-ground of the prospect, as Edmund looked towards the metropolis, the tower and spire of the church of *All-hallows in the Wall*, and the two turrets of Moorgate, now illumined by the first rays of the sun, beautifully relieved the dark, dense, and almost interminable line of the wall, from which they seemed to rise : beneath the arch of the gate all was darkness. While Edmund still gazed, the western side received the slanting ray ; and the contrast it supplied to the gloom in which the opposite part of the opening reposed added to the effect of the scene. Edmund beheld it with satisfaction, but with little pause he turned to look for the place of his immediate destination. He stood in a large marshy plain, from which a footpath lay in a north-west direction. This was continued over

“ Finsburie Field,” and through other fields, (no regular road being then in existence,) towards Islington. It was intersected by two other paths, one of which came from the north-east, apparently from Shoreditch, and the other went almost straight from Bethlem, till they joined near Moorgate, at which place they were terminated by the gardens which occupied the sites of Type-street and Grub-street, (names well known to British literature,) and reached to Cripplegate. On the northern side of the marsh, immediately without the wall, and near the entrance of the eastern part of Finsbury Field, Edmund saw, almost on the very spot now consecrated to classical research by the erection of the London Institution, the *official* residence of *Mr. Common Hunt*, “ My Lord Mayor’s Dogge House.”

This was a moderate sized tenement, in which the officer, who has more than once been mentioned, passed his days

in attendance on the hounds kept for the civic chief, when he chose to indulge in the amusements of the chase. Thither Edmund directed his steps. To knock was unnecessary ; for a hundred clamorous voices, barking in concert, announced the approach of a visitor. Dick Longthong, though a little surprised, was not uncivil, and became most friendly and cordial, on reading the note of the jester. Concealment and assistance were frankly proffered ; and Edmund, introduced into Mr. Common Hunt's canine seminary, was invited by that high personage to take share of his morning draught of ale.

CHAP. XIII.

Such an everlasting grace,
Such a beatific face,
In cloisters here this narrow floor
That possessed all hearts before.

LOVELACE.

AT an early hour on the appointed day, Lord Erpingham presented himself at the monastery. He was received in the parlour, and Egbert forthwith made his appearance.

“In the midst of life we are in death,” he began, without preface or greeting: “this we are taught, and this, we all aver, we know; but nor reason nor experience can prepare us sufficiently to expect that fate which awaits us at every age.”

Lord Erpingham was struck with the impressive solemnity of Egbert’s address. “And what,” said he, “may this portend?

I much fear, from your language, that Edmund is worse, — that his very life is despaired of.”

“ Not so, my Lord. Hope, and not despair, is that which now connects itself with his name. The thread of his existence has snapped; and the spirit which seemed fashioned for sublimer flights than earth could give it scope for, has sought its native sky.”

Astonishment and grief were expressed in the countenance of Lord Erpingham. He replied, —

“ To die is natural. Yet there is a season during which man may look to flourish. That being past, to lament that we are not ever to remain the inhabitants of this soil were sinful weakness; but when youth is prematurely blasted, even at the opening of a career of pious glory, we cannot but mourn the hard decree — so to us it appears — of Providence.”

“ Trust me, I judged not that the moment of his departure was so near at

hand. But, my Lord, He who lent has unquestionably the right, as well as the power to resume when it seemeth good to Him; and all that remains for us is submission."

Lord Erpingham bowed in assent, and intimated that he was ready to see the corpse.

"Nay," cried Egbert, "I desired that you should behold the young man while he lived, and there was a possibility of his being soothed by your presence, or by the sound of your voice; but now I would not inflict a severe — an unnecessary — shock on your feelings, by showing his person, altered as it is by death."

"Holy father, this kindness is unnecessarily extended. I shrink not from beholding in death the form of one I loved in life. Though sad the scene, it is rich in melancholy interest; and I would, on no account, forego it."

"It will distress you too much."

“ The grief which I already sustain cannot be augmented by a view of the cause of it.”

“ But, my Lord, consider. To see one whom you have only beheld in the gay bloom of laughing youth stretched in ghastly state, and arrayed for the grave—reflect how appalling the spectacle !”

“ Yet I covet to view it.”

“ Surely, my Lord, you cannot suppose —” Egbert paused in confusion. Words had nearly escaped which he had no wish to utter. He recollected the part he had to act, and added, “ You cannot resolve to sustain the shock that —”

“ The worst is past,” Lord Erpingham replied.

“ Let me pray you — let me insist, my Lord, that you spare yourself.”

“ Heed not me, good father. On this point I must be obstinate.”

The manner in which Lord Erpingham pronounced the words, “ *Heed not me,*” struck the conscious Egbert as fraught

with some latent meaning; and the perseverance with which the noble visitor pressed to see the dead body he suspected sprang from doubt of what he had been told. But still, to refuse could be of no avail, and might even provoke enquiry, if one had not already been determined upon. After another fruitless attempt to induce Lord Erpingham not to persist in the request which he had made, Egbert reluctantly led the way to the cell in which Edmund had slept when he first entered the monastery, and in which the remains of William de Broke were now deposited.

The gloom which had always pervaded the apartment had been somewhat deepened on this occasion. Lord Erpingham approached the bed on which the corpse was extended. He saw a figure not unlike that of Edmund; and while he looked on the carefully shaded face of the deceased had no suspicion of the imposture. He then spoke:—

“ I profess, death has made no small alteration in the aspect of this dear youth. My eyes are dim, and tears perhaps cause them to misrepresent what they behold. They picture to me the care-worn lineaments of more advanced age; and I doubt if I should have recognised this countenance, formerly so well known, had I not been previously informed.”

Egbert replied, — “ Death produces an awful change even in that brief space which precedes the decomposition of our mortal remains.”

“ This hand,” said Lord Erpingham, taking William by the hand, “ I hoped had been fashioned to close my eyes, when the moment of my departure should arrive. The Almighty has ordered it otherwise — his will be done.”

He gently relinquished his hold, and suffered the impatient Egbert to lead him forth.

Before leaving the monastery, he directed the funeral. At first he wished to have the body removed to St. Faith's; but, on further reflection, he desired that it should not be taken from the retreat which Edmund had preferred while living, and in which, he doubted not, it had been his wish that his bones should repose when life had fled.

Egbert saw Lord Erpingham depart with little satisfaction. Though the peer had been imposed upon, and though the arrangement made with respect to the interment was precisely what he would have dictated, his heart was not at ease. As the jester had expected, the corpse was not known when Egbert sought the dungeon to compel the prisoner to receive the draught prepared for him; but removed from the place where he had been immured, the features of William were soon recognised. The treason which this disclosed inspired well-grounded alarm. Egbert

now felt assured that William was not the individual who had favoured the attempts of Edmund. He knew not whom to suspect, nor what course to pursue, for the danger appeared equally great to prefer a random accusation, or to suffer the offence to escape punishment.

From all the enquiries which he could make, he was led to conclude that Edmund, though escaped from his prison, had not passed beyond the walls of the monastery. He had determined on a rigid search, wherever concealment was practicable, but had not been able to execute this design when Lord Epingham arrived. To prepare him for that catastrophe which had long been determined upon, Egbert had announced Edmund to be in great danger, and in such a state as to be wholly incapable of standing, or even sitting. After this, he could not meet the peer with the statement that the patient, thus enfeebled, had run away.

To risk something was absolutely unavoidable, and he decided on that step which, it has been seen, was taken with success. He was not a little disconcerted by the earnestness with which Lord Erpingham insisted on seeing the body, and doubted whether he would have done so, had he not been informed of the real state of things. Subsequently he felt relieved from this apprehension. Still uncertain whether Edmund had escaped, suspecting all he saw, yet not knowing on whom to fix as guilty, he was restless and wretched.

Bray had managed so well that by means of the extraordinary nimbleness with which he passed from place to place, Egbert could remember having had him in his view at every hour of the night; and he, of all the fraternity, was the one least suspected. He was even consulted as to the best means of discovering Edmund, if he remained con-

cealed within the walls, and of meeting his charges, if he had fairly escaped.

It was to no purpose that the strictest search was made through the monastery and the vaults beneath. The hope that he had not escaped was no more, and Egbert already regretted the part he had acted that morning. He never doubted but Edmund would hasten to communicate to Lord Erpingham all that he knew, and lamented having lost an opportunity of attempting to dispose Lord Erpingham to reject, as revived calumnies, the statements which would be made to him. He feared that it was too late to make the first impression, but it was worth trying for; and he determined to request Lord Erpingham would revisit the monastery that evening, when he purposed to announce that Edmund had fled, and to charge him with having most unexpectedly proved himself the reverse of all that he had seemed

In the midst of these anxieties, he

was summoned to the assistance of the prioress. It was not the day for confession, but the call was so pressing that he promptly obeyed, not in the pursuit of forbidden pleasures, as at other times he had done, but in the belief that something extraordinary had occurred. What might render his instant presence necessary, he could not conjecture; but struggling with the wretched fear which harrowed his soul, a wild momentary hope suggested that it was possible the flying Edmund might have made his way into the convent, and been there detained.

He found the prioress inflamed almost to madness. The conduct of Mariana on a former day had been decried to him. Egbert was well content to avenge the affront of which the prioress had complained; but the death of William, and the events consequent thereon, had so occupied him, that he had found no leisure for visiting the convent. The

severities to which Mariana had been exposed, in consequence of incurring the displeasure of the superior, had not subdued her spirit. On the contrary, she derived new courage from finding the punishment inflicted less frightful than the ambiguous menaces of the prioress had led her to expect it would prove. She had not scrupled to express her indignation in bolder language than formerly, when the prioress again admitted her to her presence. This new indignity so exasperated the fiery spirit opposed to Mariana, that Egbert was on the instant sent for, to aid with his advice her thirst for vengeance.

Little pleased at being thus called upon at a time when such extraordinary anxieties tortured him, he at first declined any immediate interference. But, informed of the intrepid spirit with which Mariana had replied to the most terrific menaces, he began to think that he discovered some connection between

her unlooked-for courage and the flight of Edmund. He took the resolution to question her forthwith, and hastened to the chapel where the prioress had told him Mariana was at that moment.

He saw her mournfully reclining over the altar. At the sound of his steps, she raised her head. Her looks were very different from those which he had expected. The exertion which she had made in the grief and indignation of the moment was too much for her strength: her courage sunk as the cause of her alarm retired, and her face was bathed with tears. Egbert had just looked on a countenance distorted by rage; and turning from the masculine violence of the prioress to the delicately feminine sorrow of Mariana, he was struck with the contrast, and a sudden start, followed by an involuntary pause, did homage to the touching power of beauty in distress.

But generous compassion found no

place in the heart of Egbert. He was sensible of the charms of Mariana ; but if he failed, while looking on them, to give a voice to the wrath of the prioress, it was only to further his own sinister views. He saw a tempting treasure within his reach, and was resolved to grasp it at all events ; but he preferred gaining it if possible, by insidious artifice, to snatching it with open violence.

“ Holy father,” said Mariana, “ may I hope that you are here to protect a feeble sufferer ?”

“ My protection, daughter, you may command. But why are you in tears ? This is not well. I fear you have been disobedient to the prioress ?”

“ I never presumed to disobey her till she invited me to offend heaven.”

“ You are rash, child. It is not well that you should be thus ready to extenuate your failings. Much I suspect that not the dread of offending heaven, but a weak attachment to some worldly lover,

has caused those tears, which now so vainly, yet so profusely, flow. Tell me, is it not so?"

Mariana answered not.

"You reply but by a sob. Come, daughter, recollect yourself, and reflect how largely you may profit by frank confession. Do you not sigh to be the companion of one who has broken his vows?"

"No."

"Ponder well on what you say. Are not your thoughts with him who wooed you once unknown to your uncle?—are they not with Edmund?"

"I have not offended by thinking of him; and he has not forgotten his vows to heaven."

"Never practise dissimulation with me. Have you not in some way been made privy to his sacrilegious flight from the monastery?"

"I nothing know of it. Has Edmund fled?"

"That look tells me how much you

rejoice that he has thus far succeeded ; and also tells me, that you were not unacquainted with his design to make the attempt."

"It is not so, holy father ; but I cannot repress the hope that some sympathising heart has described to him the fearful peril of my situation, and that he seeks the means of saving me."

"You then would fain be the companion of his flight?"

"I would fain pass from scenes of horrible profanation ; — scenes so dreadfully different from those in which it was intended that my life should be passed. O, father ! when you shall know the true cause of that displeasure under which I now labour, you will pity me."

"I came not here to listen to charges against the prioress. It is enough for me that you have avowed a disposition to join the apostate Edmund in his flight."

"I said not so."

“ But, mind me, the vengeful designs which he cherishes are not yet quite sure of being accomplished ; the means which crushed the wretched fool, Clifford, are still at my command ; and for Edmund I am not more unprepared than I was for his predecessor.”

“ You alarm me, sir.”

“ Be wise, and you have no cause for alarm. Learn to be content with the happiness that courts you here, and danger cannot reach you.”

“ But danger in its most horrid form has already assailed.”

“ Confide in me, and no one shall harm you : my bosom shall be your shield.”

While he spoke, he took her hand, and would have drawn her towards him. His tone — his look — his trembling eagerness — alarmed her, and Mariana receded from his touch. He saw the horror which he had already inspired, and angrily demanded —

“ What folly is this ! — why do you thus withdraw yourself ? ”

“ Your anger affrights — ”

“ Then appease it strait. Still you shrink from me, as though some loathsome monster shocked your senses, too terrible for endurance ! Nay, this mincing delicacy becomes you not : it ill accords with those feelings which you have unblushingly avowed, even from the day when you first came hither.”

“ Indeed, indeed, I have not wished to offend.”

“ How ! — have you not admitted you would be the companion of Edmund’s flight ? But vain the hope : his you shall never be ; and even should the worst arrive, — should he prevail in what I know he will attempt, — in ruin I shall exult that I have already tasted the joy of vengeance.”

“ Of vengeance ! ”

“ Vengeance was the word. You, who have sighed to be his, are destined

to be mine. Away with these affected terrors! If I cannot subdue your preposterous scruples, I shall not fail to triumph over your pride."

And while he spoke, he clasped the agitated Mariana in his arms. The suddenness of his advance, the rage which flashed from his eye, and the awful threats which fell from his tongue, all combined to overwhelm the forlorn object of them, and consciousness, and even life itself, seemed to fail.

Already Egbert exulted in the helpless state to which he had reduced the sufferer, when a strange sound burst on his ear. The shouts of a boisterous multitude, mingled in discordant confusion, resounded through the building. He was unable at once to determine whether the noise originated without or within the convent: but he was quickly satisfied of the latter; and, unable to move from astonishment at what he heard, he still clasped Mariana, when the

crowd rushed into the chapel. A new shout called on those who were yet behind to hasten forward, and, with coarse scoffings and loud execrations, they rushed on the abbot, calling out to their fellows, that another holy confessor had been detected with his mistress. This announcement, couched in the grossest terms, passed from mouth to mouth ; and the priest and his companion were ordered to be *coursed*. It was at this moment that Mariana revived. Had she possessed presence of mind to explain, it would have been impossible for her to be heard. She found herself forced into the street, amidst the taunts and hootings of the populace ; but her youth, her beauty, and her tears, saved her from the missiles which were liberally poured on the head of the astonished Egbert. The eagerness of the crowd to gain situations in which they could contribute to his punishment, opened a way for Mariana to pass from the thickest of

the throng. Eventually, she succeeded in getting away. A few boys and stragglers pursued her with insulting cries ; but they used no violence ; and she still fled, not knowing where she was, where to seek a refuge, or to whom to apply for shelter or advice.

CHAP. XIV.

———— the sun is down ;
His last glance fades on the mountain's peak ;
And the drooping heads of the herbage brown
Are faintly tinged with his yellow streak.

High-ways and By-ways.

TWILIGHT came on, when Mariana found herself in the midst of fields, which she had no recollection of having ever seen before, and pursuing a path which she believed led from the spot where she had been so rudely treated. To what place it was likely to conduct her she could form no idea.

All had desisted from following her. This was some relief ; but the melancholy embarrassments of her situation were painfully pressed on her consideration. She was alone, in a country of

which she knew nothing but the language. It had not been the object of Ferdinand to form connections in England, especially while Mariana remained with him. Edmund was the only friend that he had ; and to seek him, had she been satisfied that no impropriety would attach to her doing so, was utterly out of the question, as, understanding him to have retreated from the monastery, she had no clue to guide her to his present abode. Ferdinand had given her reason to believe that his stay in England would not be long ; and as soon as he thought he had ascertained that she was happily settled in her convent, it was his wish that Mariana should thenceforward never hear his name. In this instance, at least, his wishes had been attended to ; and she did not even know whether he remained in England or not.

There was yet another evil which she felt not at that time, but which, had it been the only one to which she was ex-

posed, was no small one. She was utterly destitute of money ; not a single *angel*, not a *noble* remained to her. This distressed not her mind, for had she been the mistress of boundless wealth she would have been ignorant how to employ it, to extricate herself from her present painful situation.

Though much fatigued, she thought not of rest. She walked on without object as without hope. Frequently she looked round to see that none of her late pursuers watched her footsteps. She perceived a man approaching. He soon overtook, and walked near her for some minutes without speaking. Fears, which it was impossible to repress, which it would be difficult to define, came over Mariana, while with heavy heart and weary limbs she kept on her dreary way.

“ Whither go you, maiden ? ” said the stranger, who appeared to be young. “ The night is fast closing in. Lies your convent in this direction ? ”

Mariana knew not what reply to make, yet feared to provoke by silence. He again spoke.

“ Why thus mute? Tell me, pretty wanderer, whither would you journey?”

“ I — I know not.”

“ Indeed — are you walking then at this hour and in these fields for amusement?”

“ Amusement! — O, no.”

“ You are trifling with me, pretty one. Never be thus shy. Tell me where you desire to arrive?”

“ No where.”

“ And are you accustomed thus to travel through the fields of Essex without seeking any particular spot?”

“ No.”

“ You seem almost exhausted : — lean on my arm.”

“ Pray you sir pass on. If a burthen to myself, I would not be one to you.”

“ I cannot leave one so pretty thus.

You seem sad. Are you known in these parts?"

"No."

"I guessed as much. Put yourself under my guidance, and I will conduct you to a secure resting place."

"Much I thank your proffered kindness, sir, but I may not trouble you."

"Nay, nay, the wearer of that face, sad though it seem, can give no trouble."

While speaking, he offered to take her by the arm. She moved a little from the path to avoid him.

"Concern not yourself for me. I would not detain you."

"But tell me, lovely pilgrim, whither you would repair. Will you pass to East-Ham?"

"I know it not."

"Or will you to Greenwich?"

Mariana knew not where to seek rest for the night, she therefore gave no answer to the stranger's last question. He continued : —

“ If you will thither, I can conduct you by the shortest path to the ferry, which is now not distant.”

“ To me, sir, it matters little whither I bend my steps.”

“ That is well spoken. Right glad am I to find you are a free agent : since it is even so, leave all to me. I will be your guide to Greenwich.”

“ But when I am there — ” said Mariana ; and here she paused, wanting resolution to enquire what step it might next behove her to take.

“ Nay, when you are there, I will still be near you.”

“ To what end ? ”

“ To aid you, doubtless.”

“ I know not what I ought to covet, situated as I am.”

“ You shall be aided by my judgment : I warrant, it is somewhat new to you to be left to yourself. Is it not ? ”

“ It is.”

“ You shall feel no grievance thence arising to-night.”

Mariana thought the kindness of the stranger great ; and replied, with all simplicity, —

“ For this bounty I know not how to be sufficiently grateful.”

“ I love thy frankness passing well. Since it is even thus, it shall be merry with us before we part.”

Again he offered to take her arm, and again she withdrew from his touch. He reproved this bashfulness.

“ Why thus cautious ? None can see now. But be it as you will : — a strict fast improves appetite.”

He described himself to be acquainted with many of the royal servants at Greenwich. One of these held a house near the palace, where good lodging till the morning might be obtained. Thither he proposed to take her ; and Mariana, hoping to find some female to whom she

might explain her situation, was content to remain at Greenwich that night.

They crossed the ferry, passed the palace, and shortly after the stranger stopped at a wooden house which had a gateway beneath. He entered the gateway, opened a door, and invited Mariana to follow him. The house was near the river, and wore a lonely desolate appearance. The gloomy aspect of the place appalled Mariana, and though repeatedly called, she wanted resolution to follow.

Her guide returned.

“Take you my arm, merry one,” he said: “we are now at home.”

There was something coarsely familiar in his address, which startled Mariana, and added to the terror which the sight of the house had inspired.

“Heed me no more, sir,” she mildly replied. “I wish not to rest here.”

“Come you in,” her conductor replied, “and you shall find a good fire,

and a floor well strewed with rushes. Then for a bed —”

“ I question not the cheer which may be found, nor would I detain you from it but to thank your courtesy, and decline profiting by it further.”

With these words she withdrew a few steps. The stranger followed.

“ Why how now, mistress !” he exclaimed in a loud reproachful tone, “ did you expect a lodging in the palace ?” Here is a good sound house, in which you will find a snug chamber — what would you more ?”

“ Nothing, friend ; therefore, with thanks, I bid you farewell.”

“ Nay, since I have come thus far, you are not now to fly from your bargain. Go to, I’ll none of your practising here ; — in I say, in.”

“ I know not to what your speech points. What would you, man ?”

“ Marry, that shall be explained anon, better than mere words can explain. But in, I say.”

He threw his arm round her waist. Mariana burst from his grasp, shrieking for help. He seized her again.

“ I am not to be fooled thus,” he cried, “ by a runaway nun’s pretended modesty. Here you shall stay to-night. In the morning go where you list.”

“ And by what right,” cried one, who now snatched the pale fugitive from the ruffian’s grasp, “ do you thus insist ?”

“ By her own consent.”

“ The consent is revoked.”

“ And what gave you authority to decide between us ?”

“ The shriek of distress, and the voice of violence. These will warrant more than I have yet done ; and by this right arm, an indifferently powerful one some have found it, you will experience rough treatment if you prove me further.”

“ You are not going to carry the girl, though, for all that,” said Mariana’s late guide.

He again took hold of Mariana, but

was himself seized at the same moment, and thrown off with violence. It was now clear that force could nothing avail, and he contented himself with furiously railing at his antagonist.

“Amuse yourself,” retorted the latter, “with silly insolence, if that can pleasure you. The respectful distance at which you hold your person more than atones for the effrontery of any taunt that your wit can devise.”

And without deigning further reply he withdrew, leading Mariana. Though nearly dark, he could discern a countenance of more than common beauty, and his steadfast gaze was repeatedly fixed upon it. Bewildered by the stormy scenes of the day, after the conduct which had shocked her first in Egbert, and then in her late pretended friend, Mariana could as yet but little felicitate herself on her situation. She was in the power of a man, and all men, she feared, were alike.

“ May I ask,” enquired her deliverer,
 “ what melancholy chance placed you
 near yonder brawler ?”

“ It was accident, and fearful calamity.”

“ Calamity !”

“ Even so. The kindness of an only relative placed me, as he thought, in honourable security. But those whom he regarded as among the most pious of mankind proved monsters, from whom I have been accidentally saved.”

“ Your faltering voice admonishes me that to question further might be to inflict pain. Know you any one in this town beneath whose roof you can rest ?”

“ Alas ! no. I am wholly a stranger in England.”

“ And whence come you, then ?”

“ I am from Spain, and know no person in this country.”

“ Then you must with me.”

“ With you !” Mariana exclaimed ; and the rudeness from which she had just

been rescued, and the treachery of Egbert, were again present to her imagination.

The stranger marked her tremulous voice, and was at no loss to guess the cause of the alarm which she manifested. He remarked on it :—

“ Cruelty has made you timid, and you fear to find a new oppressor in me. Dismiss your anxiety. I will speedily leave you ; but I will first conduct you to one of your own sex, in whom you may with safety confide. She has known affliction herself, and in her house you will find a commodious asylum for the night. Nay, cease to tremble. If there be truth in man, you are safe from harm. Your situation particularly interests me. I would fain hope it may be in my power to serve you ; — but of this in the morning.”

A little re-assured by the apparent sincerity of his manner, Mariana suffered him to conduct her through the town.

He stopped at a house near the church, which was not large, but which had an air of neatness about the exterior, very different from that of the dismal abode which Mariana had refused to enter.

The door was opened by a servant. Mariana was told by her deliverer, that he would not risk alarming her by passing into the same dwelling that night. To the mistress of the house, who now appeared, he addressed himself. He briefly appealed to her benevolence in behalf of an innocent sufferer, (for such he said he was certain she would prove,) and entreated that the lady he accosted would allow Mariana to repose there till the morning.

Some surprise was manifested at the application; but before reply was given, he added, —

“ I would not in a common case thus trespass on your bounty; but the situation of this young maiden is not a little extraordinary; and, trust me, you will

never repent conceding the boon which I solicit."

Consent was given with much cordiality ; and promising to return in the morning, the individual who had conducted Mariana thither took his leave. The mistress of the house was somewhat reserved in her manner. When she spoke, her language was most kind and courteous, but her eye was sometimes fixed on Mariana with a vacant stare, which surprised the timid guest ; and it was evident that her thoughts, wandering from the objects immediately before her, were wholly engrossed with other matters.

Mariana slightly partook of refreshments, which with much seeming hospitality were brought forth. She then followed her entertainer to a bedchamber.

" You shall have," said the latter, " my own bed. I will rest in another room."

Mariana requested that this might not be.

“ Say nothing, child, it shall be no inconvenience to me. You are faint from fatigue, and I would not that my presence should withhold you from the repose of which you stand in need.”

Mariana replied by expressing thankfulness. The lady, who had turned to a small open cabinet, appeared steadfastly to gaze on its contents. The slightest motion of Mariana caused a corresponding change of position on the part of the lady, evidently for the purpose of interposing her form to the exclusion of all view of the object which she contemplated. Having closed the cabinet, she attempted to move it from the room, but for this her strength was insufficient, and she retired.

The mysterious caution used with respect to the cabinet powerfully attracted the attention of Mariana. Circumstanced as she was, every thing

alarmed her. She coveted to know what the lady had so curiously regarded. The key was in the cabinet, and no obstacle presented itself to the gratification of her curiosity. She approached it ; but instantly reprovèd as unworthy and as mean the desire which she strove in vain to conquer, and was withdrawing, when her veil hitched on that part of the fastening which adhered to the cover, when the cabinet was unlocked. Before she had time to disengage it, her backward step had raised the lid, and she saw with sensations which no language can describe, the wasted countenance of a human being. The cabinet was lined with lead. The ghastly object which had arrested her attention reposed in a small shroud, and a thin crape veil partially covered what it could not conceal. The flesh was dried away, the eyes had perished in their sockets, but part of the discoloured gums remained, and the beard, which seemed to have been

grey from age, was carefully spread over the white ruff placed round this sad relic of one departed. The door was opening, when Mariana suffered the lid of the cabinet to fall. The mistress entered, accompanied by a servant, with whose assistance the cabinet was removed from the apartment. Mariana thought the lady bestowed upon her a look which intimated suspicion of what had been done in her absence, and indignation growing thereon. The kindness of her language when she again returned could not dissipate this idea; and Mariana shuddered at the thought of passing the night in a house which she supposed to have been the scene of murder. What might be intended with respect to herself she was at a loss to surmise; but shocked and terrified as she was, she entertained no hope of repose, and was only prevented by the fear of being forcibly obstructed from making known her desire to leave the house forthwith.

For the present she resolved to remain silent, and, if possible, to retreat in the course of the night, and take the chance of finding a new resting place where she might be less menaced by treachery and outrage.

CHAP. XV.

O this is love! fast clinging still
 Through danger, ignominy, ill;
 This, this is love — and, oh! if e'er
 This passion, tenderly sublime,
 Is doom'd a sorrowing pang to bear
 By some foul spoiler's dastard crime,
 Oh! blame it not; but while you swell
 The ingrate wretch to execrate,
 Let every burst of passion tell
 Indignant grief for beauty's fate.

GRATTAN.

FROM that night on which Clifford and Elinor perceived a stranger listening, as it appeared to their conversation, the latter felt rather reluctant to remain alone after nightfall. It however so happened, that in the next few weeks Clifford absented himself from his humble home more than usual. He had been in the habit of walking on the lonely

shore in silence and in darkness. Many hours had been thus consumed in painful meditation ; but Elinor, while she wept for the mental affliction to which her lord was a prey, had at least the satisfaction of knowing that he was near, and of hearing his step at intervals when he passed the hovel. But this comfort, mean as it was, had now been withdrawn from her ; and when she most needed his protection, she found herself in perfect solitude.

But the mind by degrees becomes reconciled to situations the most perilous or unpleasant, so far as to lose that terror and keen sense of irksomeness which are the evils first resulting from them. Elinor, if she desired his presence, felt no longer disturbed at the absence of Clifford ; and the appearance of the listener was almost forgotten.

Sitting one night alone, she thought the sound of Clifford's footstep struck her ear. She listened for the repetition of

it, and was convinced. Some one approached, and she hastened to open the door. A man entered, and stood before her. His face was half concealed by his hand, but she quickly perceived that it was not Clifford.

“What want ye, sir,” she enquired, “that thus you come unbidden to this humble dwelling? Whom seek ye?”

“Its degraded, wretched mistress,” replied the intruder, in a voice which made her start with emotion, for she instantly recognized her father.

“I see,” he continued, “you shrink from me. This I condemn not: the shame and remorse thus indicated become your condition.”

“I wish not to provoke my father, but trust it will not be deemed offence in me, if I disclaim commendation not my due. Though I cannot but dread your anger, it will not fall on shame or remorse.”

“How! — have you no vestige remain-

ing of that modesty which once made you lovely, that you feel nothing for the shame which you have heaped on your dishonoured family?"

"If to have connected myself with calumniated worth, and unmerited poverty, be shame, I merit reproach; but my conscience tells me this can never be; and a day will arrive when, on calm reflection, you shall acknowledge that you judged your daughter harshly."

"Heaven send me patience! Dare you then shamelessly contend that, in flying from a fond father to the arms of a criminal paramour, there is nothing to make reason condemn, or honour blush?"

"This I have not done. Those who maliciously traduced my husband have, perhaps ignorantly, slandered me. He is no criminal—he is no paramour. Clifford is, and lowly as his estate may be, I avow it with pride, he is my husband."

Sir Geoffrey did not expect this intelligence ; and, little as he wished for such a son-in-law, he was slightly consoled at hearing a positive contradiction given to one serious charge against his daughter, which till then, under the circumstances of her flight, he had never dared to question.

“ It is of small import,” he moodily replied, “ what title you give the wretch, since the disgrace of being his cannot be explained away ; but, little as you merit from the father you have wronged, my pity interferes to snatch you from the gulf in which you have been plunged by folly. Leave the degraded Clifford, and you shall still have a father and a home.”

“ Never, sir.”

“ Still disobedient ! Was it not enough that you spurned the prudent counsel which I offered, heeded not the engagements into which I had entered, and fled my roof to get me pointed at by the finger of scorn ?”

“ Let me entreat your pardon, and for one moment speak in my own justification. It was you that destined me to be the wife of Clifford. You credulously received the tale of his guilt ; I knew him better, and knew that he was innocent. With this impression on my mind, I scrupled not to become his wife ; for my heart heeded not his poverty, disdained to study arithmetic, and could not learn to admit *sovereigns, reals, and George-nobles*, into its calculations.”

“ Be this as you will ; but I hoped months enough had passed to cure you of the romantic folly which induced you to err, and expected to witness joy and gratitude when invited to leave a tyrant, for such I know him to be, who long since spurned you as a valueless toy, and bad you to the friends from whom he had seduced you.”

“ He has not acted such a part.”

“ Practise no new deception. I know (for I have taken care that he should

be watched) that he has churlishly reproached, and scornfully ordered you from him."

"Unhappy Clifford! misrepresentation still pursues thy every word and action! Sir, I will not deny that he has sometimes harshly spoken; but even when this has chanced, the swift atoning tear has pursued his wrath, and washed away its traces. His tortured spirit, now moved by resentment of oppression, now torn by grief for my distress, not for his own, has used hasty expressions, and he has wished that I should consult my own welfare (had it been possible) by leaving him. He has only been disturbed while he mourned the privations which I sustained; and thus his very anger was the undoubted child of love."

"You are mad, to defend one who has dealt so hardly by you."

"You are mistaken, or you would not thus accuse him. He never spoke harshly but when he was unhappy; and of late

he has become less sad than formerly. Chance has thrown a friend in his way, who has prevailed over his scruples, and induced him to accept of assistance."

" And do you know that friend ?"

" I do not, sir."

" Then I will tell you something of the friendship from which you, still foolishly sanguine, are weak enough to hope for comfort. The individual who so benevolently assists him is a female ; and much I suspect—"

" Suspect ! nay, spare further speech : Clifford has already suffered too much from suspicion."

" But suspicion may lead to truth."

" The truth, if sad, will come soon enough without the aid of such a leader."

" Are you then so tame as to endure even the shadow of the insult I believe he offers to you daily ?"

" If it be tameness not to merit insult from my husband, by evincing want of confidence in him, I am so tame, that I

would teach all who desire to arraign him to breathe their thoughts to any one but me."

"Elinor, I blush to call you mine."

"I am sad to hear it; but not to make you recall the hard speech, would I so conduct myself that my husband should blush to call me his."

"I now believe it useless to say more, as I doubt not your abject spirit would want courage to rise against your tyrant, though clearest evidence were given of his falsehood."

"It might be so; for I should then suspect that his wanderings sprung from my imperfections."

"Away! I trusted I should find you cured of this love-sick folly. This senseless passion offends me."

"Think not so meanly of your own blood, nor look upon your daughter as the despicable slave of ungovernable passion. I loved Clifford for his generous nature; and when the world conspired to blast his

fame, I called him before the tribunal of my understanding. There he was acquitted,—and then I but sighed to share, if I could not mitigate his distress. I regret not the step I have taken. Above the world's pity and its scorn, I exult in the unsullied honour of my husband. He, by nature just and kind to all beside, will not be otherwise to me,—and on the rock of his worth I securely repose.”

“ Are you then content to grovel on in this ignominious poverty ?”

“ While he must endure it, I can bear it without repining. But in another land we look for happier fortunes. In a few days there is reason to believe that we shall be on our way to those rich countries beyond the western wave, where European knowledge cannot but give its possessor immense advantages among the unlettered natives. There, teaching them the arts which adorn life, we may grow old in happy retirement, lost and forgotten by the unregretted world.”

“ Amazement ! And are you then prepared to cross the vast Atlantic ! — to forego your native land for ever ? ”

“ Why not ! Can you wonder that those should desire an asylum among wild but not ferocious men, who have suffered so much from civilized savages ? ”

“ But have you reflected on the rugged scenes — the burning climate to which you would expose yourself ? ”

“ I have, and am prepared for all. Through the wilderness and over the waste, I fear not to follow my husband. I can brave the ardour of the noonday sun, and the gloom of midnight. Though lions roar and serpents hiss around us, hope still will soothe the anxious bosom, and sacred love shall sustain the frame which else had sunk from weakness.”

Sir Geoffrey was affected by the enthusiasm of his child. He replied in a subdued tone :—

“ Though disobedient, Elinor, you still are mine. I would not be harsh. But I much lament this generous warmth has not been called forth by a more deserving object. Clifford, alas ! — I know it but too well — is really unworthy, and —”

“ If, sir, you would not deal harshly by your daughter, let your indignation fall on me, but speak not injuriously of my absent husband.”

“ Your husband is present to answer for himself,” said Clifford, who now entered, and who had heard, as he approached, the latter part of the conversation. He looked proudly on Sir Geoffrey, but saluted him not. Clifford paused for the knight to proceed, but he was silent.

“ Well, sir,” Clifford at length said, “ why should my presence check your speech ? It is safe to calumniate me at all seasons.”

The mean habiliments which the husband of his daughter wore, combined

with the care and sorrow traced in his countenance, formed so strong a contrast to the gay and youthful Clifford, such as Sir Geoffrey had once known him, that he felt compassion strong in his bosom, and thus addressed the husband of his daughter : —

“Clifford, you have fearfully wandered in the paths of shame. — Nay, start not at the word, for it is not my purpose to reproach. You have already suffered much. I would fain forgive what I cannot forget. I spare that which might be said. In token of forgiveness take my hand.”

“Not if it were an emperor’s. I scorn forgiveness, not being guilty, and disdain to be endured, where I am not esteemed.”

“I would mitigate the rigour of your destiny.”

“I will not see it mitigated on such terms.”

“I would lift you from the state of

poverty and ignominy in which I find you."

"Sir, it needs not. I soon leave these shores for ever, but while here, I stand no longer in relation to men as I did; and the opinions of others have not the influence on my conduct which they once possessed. I have had time to enquire what shame is, and I find that it is neither created nor removed by poverty or wealth. The unreflecting great may despise lowly industry; but I hold the meanest occupation illustrious, compared with servile dependance."

"It is folly to spurn kindness."

"It were baseness in the guiltless to receive it as mercy to a culprit."

"Thus perverse, you must remain in that state to which you have been so long consigned."

"Be it so; and much as I have been injured, I ought not to account myself unhappy. A rich inheritance and high connections were formerly the vessel of

my fortune, which was charged with a cargo of matchless worth. The winds arose — my once triumphant bark perished in the storm. This was sad ; but mine was the unlooked-for joy, to see the golden freight — the dazzling treasure, — which had given it tenfold value, spring of its own spontaneous motion from the wreck, and come with infinitely augmented value into my possession.”

“ What mean you ? ”

“ Need I say, the peerless cargo of which I speak was Elinor. Thus favoured by Heaven, for myself I will not repine. Soon borne by favouring gales to other climes, I shall mock the impotent wrath of those who sought to crush me, and you, perhaps, will ere long know me basely wronged, and know that, save by early extravagance, I have not been degraded by my own actions.”

“ Of these I will not speak,” said Sir Geoffrey. “ Since to America you would take your course, I will provide that a

band of gallant navigators shall be ready to transport you thither."

"Your care, sir, may be spared. All is arranged ; and to-morrow, should the wind prove fair, I shall be in the bark which is to bear me hence."

Sir Geoffrey renewed his offers of service ; but as he expressed no opinion on Clifford's innocence, all were haughtily rejected. The father lingered long, and gazed with sadness on the poverty which surrounded his daughter, while he felt not a little disturbed by the perils to which she prepared to expose herself. He reflected that, in a few hours, she would be past recall ; and it touched him nearly to see her depart under such circumstances. He was disposed to be bountiful, but could not own conviction that Clifford was guiltless ; and Clifford, stern and uncompromising to the last, would receive no aid from one who held that opinion which Sir Geoffrey could not deny to be his.

CHAP. XVI.

————— There is one within,
 Besides the things, that we have heard and seen,
 Recounts most horrid sights.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN Lord Erpingham retired from the supposed remains of Edmund, he hastened to his home, and shut himself in his study for the day. Even-song was over, —the domestics had all retired, —and he supposed every one to sleep but himself, when the door of his study was cautiously opened, and Ferdinand entered.

The silence in which he approached, and with which he now passed into the room, attracted Lord Erpingham's attention.

“ I imagined,” he said, “ that you were sleeping.”

“ Be my other faults what they may, my Lord,” Ferdinand replied, “ the re-

proach due to the sluggard belongs not to me."

" I spoke not in reproach ; but the hour has arrived which commonly brings needful rest to all in this abode."

" Aye, my Lord ; but no hour brings me needful rest. What the present may do for me, I know not ; but learning that your Lordship proposed to sit up late, I judged this a fitting opportunity to wait on you."

" Your manner," Lord Erpingham replied, " has much of strangeness in it. I required not your attendance, and wish not to be interrupted in my meditations."

" I shall assist you in your meditations, and in a way which will yield you some surprise."

" Your tone is peremptory. This is not to be endured. I command you to withdraw."

" It must be endured, my Lord, and I shall not withdraw."

“ You become insolent: leave the room, or I will call the domestics.”

“ The call will be your last, then ; for if you stir from the spot on which you now rest, or if you raise your voice but in the slightest degree above your ordinary tone, this dagger shall bind you to eternal silence.”

Lord Erpingham started at seeing the deadly weapon produced from the bosom of Ferdinand.

“ What can this mean ?” he exclaimed: “ have I an assassin in my house ?”

“ No, my Lord. You err most egregiously. In me you see a minister of justice, who attends to execute a criminal, but no assassin.”

“ Some horrible malady has surely assailed your reason, since you address such speech to me.”

“ Would it were so! for I might then be stayed, and you survive.”

“ What monstrous enigma is this ? That you whom I have respected, I

might almost say loved as my own blood, should thus intrude on the hours dedicated to solemn sorrow for a dear departed fellow-creature, and he your friend, confounds my understanding not less than it shocks my senses.”

“ It is that death, and the opportunity growing upon it, that bring me here at this hour. Sir, it is mine to recall scenes which you have consigned to forgetfulness. After you had retired, one came hither with a report, that the corpse you saw this day was not that of Edmund, but that he had been murdered ; and further it was stated, that Egbert had destroyed him, and had been detected within the walls of his own monastery in wanton dalliance with a courtesan. These things, if true, prove tremendous depravity ; and it now becomes my duty to trace the genealogy of the imputed crime, till I shew that the death of Edmund is offspring to the former guilt of Lord Erpingham.”

“ I have wished,” Lord Erpingham replied, “ so to conduct myself through life, that I might at the appointed time be ready to give death welcome. But to be murdered in cold blood, and on false pretences, is that for which I am but imperfectly prepared. Tell me the good you promise yourself from this deed : — tell me the price of it, and you shall have the gold you covet, without incurring the guilt of murder.”

“ Gold ! far from seeking to obtain gold, I have some to restore. Here, my Lord with what I have received as pay, is what you have forced on me as gifts. Now I am nothing your debtor ; for the bread which I have eaten in your house my labour has earned.”

With these words he offered a purse to Lord Erpingham, who, regarding but the countenance of his accuser, saw it not. Ferdinand laid it on the table.

“ I am more amazed than before !” Lord Erpingham exclaimed. “ Have I

been such an unfeeling tyrant to my secretary, as to deserve that not even gold should be received in ransom for my blood ?”

“ No, this is not imputed. I will do justice to your virtues, as well as to the atrocities which are now to be expiated. As employer, (had no previous wrong been committed,) you had claimed affectionate attachment and undying gratitude. I have also observed kindness to others. Oh ! that you had ever been the same !”

“ Can you then admit that I have been kind to you, and to others, so far as you have seen, and yet be satisfied with nothing short of my destruction ?”

“ It is even thus. I feel my task more painful than it would otherwise have been. I foresaw that it might be so, when Edmund first proposed that I should take employment beneath this roof ; but I conquered my reluctance by reflecting that this would, in some sort,

partake of mercy; and by no other means could just vengeance be made so complete.”

“Still incomprehensible! — How mercy and vengeance could be gratified by the same step, I understand not.”

“ Few words shall explain. Your death was decided upon. Ere this you had fallen, but that I had become your inmate; and being certain that you could not escape, was content to wait till I might approach you as I have now done. This was mercy, because it spared you for some weeks of charitable labour; and it contributes to vengeance, because it enables me to make you know that you fall by no common stabber’s hand, and that when you feel my dagger’s point, not rapine — not sudden wrath, but just retribution — strikes the blow.”

“ Is it possible that such a return can be made for admitted kindness? Have I warmed a serpent in my bosom !”

“ Talk you of a serpent ? Have you no recollection of one that formerly reposed on the softest, fondest breast that nature’s hand had ever fashioned ? Let your thoughts travel some years back, my Lord, and you shall then recall how she, round whom one serpent twined, was stung even to death. Shall I remind you of the beauty you wooed, and of the barbarity with which you destroyed the fair you had sworn to protect ? Can you forget how you left her to ferocious murderers, — if, indeed, it were not that ruthless hand which performed the fiend-like office of giving to unearthly love its bloody recompence ? ”

“ What horrors are these ! I cannot doubt but you refer to acts supposed to have been committed beyond the ocean, acts of which I am not only innocent, but positively ignorant. Calm the rage which now deprives you of reason, and I will lay before you such proofs as — ”

“Thou art old and crafty, but thou shalt in vain seek to over-reach me. It is mine to perform an awful part to night, and this is not a case in which argument can prevail. The full tide of vengeance which pursued from year to year is now about to overwhelm thee. No plausibility can move me from my purpose; as well mightst thou try thine eloquence upon the warring winds, and reason with the storm.”

“You know not what you do. I am unconscious of that which you charge me with.”

“Yes, your conscience is seared. Often have I sought to wake you to repentance, by describing and condemning guilt like yours, till I have almost disclosed the object of my coming. But, still callous, you have remained, outwardly at least, forgetful of the early depravity which now, though late, consigns you to the grave.”

“ I know your speech has often been mysterious, and I have called for explanation. But when you denounced crime, it affected not me. All that I knew in America I would willingly have unfolded to you, had I deemed it to be that in which you could feel interested. Now, I am not more assured that I continue to exist, than I am that you are deceived.”

“ Impossible ! no subterfuge can avail. Look on this portrait — is it not yours ?”

Lord Erpingham started at recognising a miniature of himself, which he had not seen for many years.

“ This is my portrait,” he said. “ It was the gift of love to one no longer on earth.”

“ It was indeed a gift to one no longer on earth, — not of love, but of perfidy. Your features were too strongly marked by nature, and too accurately copied by art, to make it possible for me to mis-

take. Now look on me : — see you no trace of features once familiar ?”

“ They have often reminded me of one most dear.”

“ Of thy murdered wife ?”

“ Murdered !”

“ That was the expression. Would I might recall it !”

“ By Heaven you may, for — ”

“ Peace, and hear me. I am the brother of that wife, — the son of Teutila, respecting whose death you once questioned me.”

“ Can it be possible ! — Gracious God ! am I awake !”

While speaking, Lord Erpingham sprung from his chair, with uncontrollable emotion, and advanced towards Ferdinand.

“ Resume your seat, my Lord, or you throw away the few moments I am disposed to allow you to survive.”

Lord Erpingham sank backwards, almost swooning from the shock inflicted

by the sudden surprise which he experienced. Ferdinand continued : —

“ I am the son of that Teutila, whose daughter became your wife. Shall I remind you of your conduct, when, about to return to Europe, you blushed to meet the friends of your early life with an American partner ? ”

“ This is all error. ”

“ But the gold which you obtained through that wife you were not ashamed to bring to your native country. That, was safely carried on board ship, while its rightful mistress, with infamous, with hellish cruelty, was handed over to murderers, if the wounds which mangled her devoted form were not inflicted by you. This was the part acted by the pretended Don Gomez. You left your infant daughter helpless and destitute, and passed on board the vessel which brought you to Europe. Ought baseness like this to escape punishment ? ”

Lord Erpingham, gasping for breath,

looked wildly on the speaker, but could make no reply. Ferdinand went on:—

“ When Teutila found himself dying, I, then a boy, was called to his side. He recounted to me the inhumanity and cowardice of Don Gomez, (for that was the name by which you were known,) and made me swear a solemn oath to pursue the betrayer. ‘ The bones of Isabella — so, by your wish, his daughter had been named — lie still uncovered,’ cried the dying cazique. ‘ Their gory bed has not been washed clean ; the unappeased spirit will still cry against you, till vengeance has been won. Sit not inactive on your mat, my son, but lift your hatchet, or grasp the dagger, to console the dead, and tell the imploring shade of your sister that her wrongs shall yet be revenged.’ ”

“ This is an awful moment ! but hear me — hear me speak.”

“ Waste not thy breath in vain denial ; thy fate is sealed. I took the oath, and

will not be perjured. Though taught to reverence the Christian faith, I retain the thirst for vengeance of the tribe from which I spring. Timid and feeble as Europeans consider the children of America, it is known that I lack not resolution in a cause like this. The swamp, the river, the cane-forest, and the mountain, have in vain interposed between my ancestors and the objects of their resentment ; and the mighty barrier of the ocean has proved not sufficient to save you. I passed into Spain with the cousin of Teutila, and the daughter you had deserted.”

“ Lives she still ? Was Mariana a daughter of mine ? ”

“ She lives, but knows not that she has a father to reproach. That Mariana, whom you deserted, I have saved from the world, and devoted to the service of her Creator. In Spain I learned, after a long search, that the pretended Gomez was an Englishman. I waited, hearing

you were expected on a mission to Madrid, and possessed myself of your language, with which I found I had unknowingly been made familiar in my infancy. You came not : I would pause no longer ; and at length sought and found you here. Now you understand why I take your life ; and, since I have recalled the crimes which stain that life, I am nothing amazed at the agitation which convulses your frame.”

“ The emotion you remark is not what you suppose. I have only to implore—”

“ Implore nothing. I am sad that one of thy venerable aspect should fall beneath my hand ; but that cannot avail. Seek not mercy from me ; solicit it elsewhere ;—but it is mockery to suggest this ; for, Oh ! what hope can a wretch cherish from a prayer addressed to the Father of all, who has shown no love, no pity, for the helpless one who might claim to call him parent ?”

“ I thank the Being to whom you

would direct my thoughts, that I have not been so wanting in reflection through life, as to have failed to solicit him for support in death. Believe me, not for my own life now, but for thy soul, I plead."

"If guilt attach to the fulfilment of a solemn oath to punish crime, my soul must pay the penalty."

"I would save you from guilt of which you dream not — which you would tremble to incur — not the guilt of simple murder — but that of —"

"Of what, old man?"

"Of parricide."

"Parricide! Terror has disordered thy brain, or thou wouldst not think to stay my arm by such a poor invention."

"Deem it not an invention; for, by my every hope of future mercy, I speak the truth. By the fierce throbs which agitate this bosom, if thou art he who was supposed to be the son of Teutila, thou seest in me thy father."

"Thou ravest!"

“ Well may a father rave in the awful moment when he recognizes his son — Oh! thought of horror! — in him who is about to become his assassin! — Hear me! hear me!”

“ Before I came to this apartment I ascertained that all in the house besides were sleeping. But for that, the brief respite now conceded had been denied. Since delay cannot save, if still the foe of thine own soul, give utterance to the mad falsehood which thou art so anxious I should hear.”

“ That delay is *not* my object, you shall know from the few words which I will use. I deny the imputed guilt which you have sworn to revenge. On that night which saw me leave Zempoalla, most true it is that I could not defend my Isabella.”

“ Enough: I am not curious to hear in what terms you would qualify your base desertion, if that were all.”

“ But I was not separated from her. Hers was the glory of bearing her wounded lord to the ship, in which he sailed with her, for Europe.”

“ Go on, my Lord : this craft much diminishes the pity which I lately felt. Know, to thy confusion, that she whose blood now calls for thine was found barbarously slaughtered. Go on : — yet, on better reflection, I will not be accessory to thy deeper perdition by hearing more. My mercy shall prevent thee from further sinning against truth.”

“ Let me explain.”

“ I have heard enough. I give thee one moment for prayer, for heavy is the load of guilt which rests upon thy soul. The desertion of thy wife and offspring has doomed me to a wandering life of sorrow ; the lovely being who claimed from me an uncle’s care, to the gloom of a convent ; and, finally, through thy enormous crime, the gallant, generous Edmund has prematurely perished. So-

licit pardon, but be brief, for I may no longer delay."

Lord Erpingham raised his eyes to Heaven, and gave his thoughts utterance in the form of a prayer : —

" Creator of man, forgive, forgive the mistaken son, now about to imbrue his hands in a father's blood. If it be thy will that I should perish, even by one of the dear objects of my anxious solicitude through many mournful years, I bow with resignation to the stern decree ; — but, Oh! let not my death be remembered against him who knows not what he does."

" And darest thou, in thy final hour, thus mock the majesty of Heaven with impious idle falsehoods, fashioned into prayer ?"

" To such daring I am unequal."

" Had'st thou been what thou pretendest to be, the fond, the anxious father, thou had'st not rested here in ease and affluence, unmindful of the fate of thy children."

“ Nor have I ever paused in my efforts to regain them. When Edmund went to Spain, he was charged with letters, to many who were recently from America, concerning this subject, so near to my heart.”

“ You have prudently named one who is dead, that I may not refer to him for proof. Yet that the assertion is false admits not of doubt ; for if true, would he never have mentioned to me that he had been so occupied ?”

“ Matters which immediately concerned himself engaged his attention. Besides, he knew not at first that you were from America ; and subsequently your impenetrable reserve baffled both him and me, when we ventured on enquiry. I thought I had ascertained that you could not give me the information I coveted, and disturbed you no more with questions which seemed to wake painful recollections. He who has just yielded up his spirit knew my anxiety, though he might forbear to name my sorrows, from fear that

by doing so even to others, he might be the means of renewing them."

"This is plausibly urged, and Edmund cannot contradict. Assured of this, you can fearlessly venture the invention."

"Would to Heaven it were lawful to invoke his shade to leave for one moment the world to which it now belongs! Might this be, his spectre would not hesitate to obey the summons, and attest the truth of what I have said."

"No more of this solemn trifling. This instant sees thee numbered with the dead, and gives thy guilty soul, unprepared as it may be, to the awful punishment which awaits it."

Death seemed inevitable. Lord Erpingham made no effort to avoid the blow. His hands were clasped, his eyes were closed, and his undefended bosom was presented with the firmness of resignation to the weapon's point.

Ferdinand, while he gazed on the venerable being whom he devoted to destruction, felt a thrill of pity, which

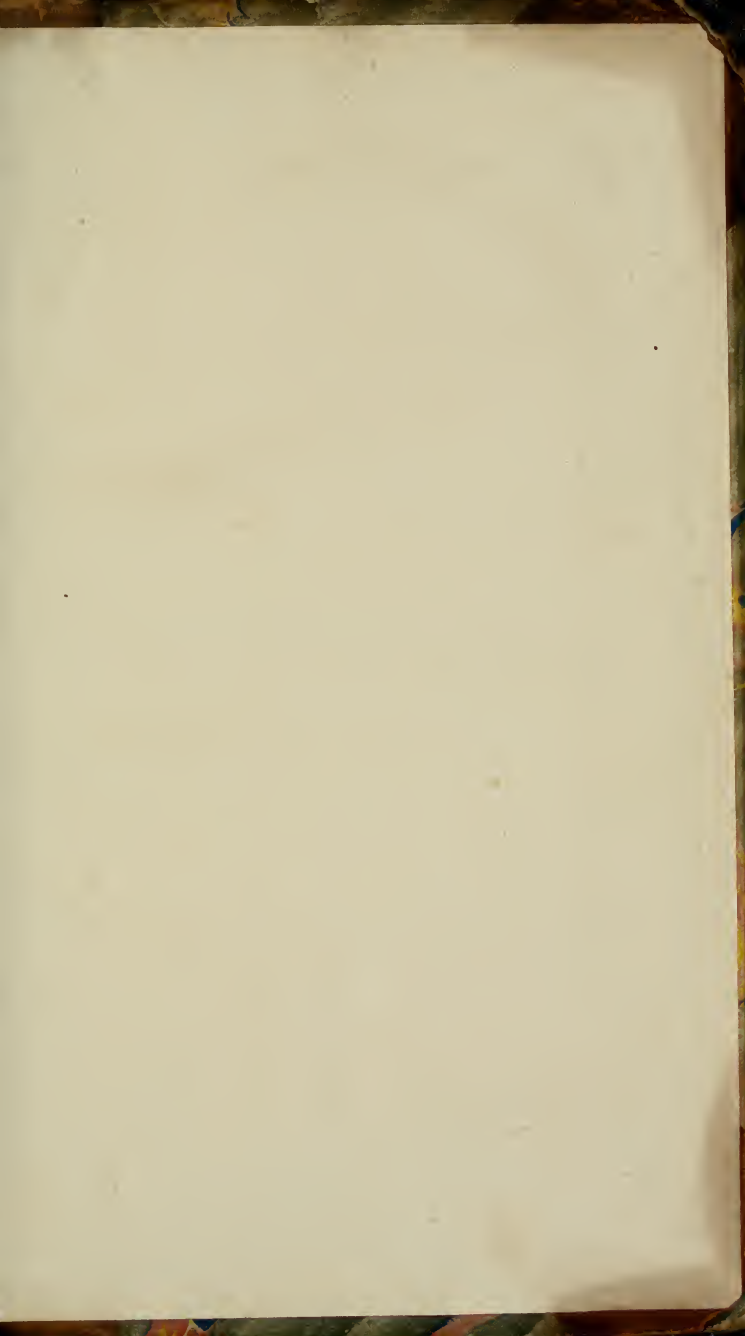
the ardour of his resentment had for a time prevented him from acknowledging, and his hand paused, reluctant to inflict the fatal wound. The glance of Lord Erpingham met his, and reproaching his own weakness, he made a determined effort to shake it off.

“ Guilty spirit, — now — now take thy flight !” he exclaimed, and his arm was impetuously raised : — it was descending, when the blood suddenly deserted his cheek, — the dagger fell from his nerveless hand, — his eyes glared wildly, as if some ghastly object had been presented to them, too horrible for mortal man to look upon and live ; and shrinking back with shuddering alarm, which no language can describe, he faintly articulated — “ Creator of man, save me ! — save me !”

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